

Blood Letter

by LeisaTheGreat

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Summary: Following the events of Hope and Heir, Hiccup and Toothless are badly injured and have been forbidden to do anything too strenuous until their wounds have healed. However, when the situation with the invading army gets dangerous once again, they have no choice but to take matters into their own hands. (Many moments of Hiccstrid) OC. (BOOK 2, sequel to Hope and Heir) I love REVIEWS!

1. Escaping Berk

**Chapter One**

**A/N: Sorry for the wait guys, I was violently ill with some kind of food poisoning or stomach bug or something. But FINALLY here we are! I hope you enjoy and don't forget to REVIEW!**

**Also, Astrid and Stoick might be a little OOC in this chapter but it's only because of the fear/stress of the situation. **

**In response to...**

_PinkMustache: __**Oh wow. XD Way to work THAT joke in!**_

_Jesusfreak: __**I AM evil, I admit it! XD And you know how I love my cliffhangers.**_

_Jo: __**Thanks! I'm glad you enjoyed it! **_

_DoomsdayBeamXD: __**Yes, yes I did. And sorry for the suffering. It's just my way. XD**_

_Foxlight the Dragon Trainer: __**I'm glad! :D And wait no more~ Here it is!**_

_Breyannia: __**Haha, thank youu~ And sorry, I don't mean to kill you!**_

_OinkyThePiggy: __**Thanks! And you got that right! You'll see how worried they were in this fanfic. Lol, writer's block is the WORST!**_

_LittleDragonRider: __**I'm sorrrryyyy! D: And you'll find out about the assassin soon.**_

_Yondaime Namikaze: __**Haha, yep. That would be unfortunate!**_

_XxPinkMustachexX: __**No it is definitely NOT their day! XD And yes, getting hit by arrows would hurt. (It hurts just getting hit by the bow string! Trust me, I know. So I can't imagine how it would feel to get SHOT.) And don't worry, I'm also a nerd. Just ate my breakfast to a documentary about the Egytians so... **_

_NightFury999: __**I am hopefully over my writer's block and here's the sequel! :D**_

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><p>"Are ya' sure about this, Stoick?" Gobber makes sure to keep his voice low so the others won't hear him. The other Hooligans have already accepted what has to be done. They accept it grudgingly, but they accept it all the same. They know they have no other choice. But Gobber is still unsure about all this... He doesn't want to leave his friend, not to mention his injured apprentice, alone on this island... It just doesn't sound like a good idea to him.<p>

"It's not like I have a choice, Gobber." Stoick grumbles unhappily. "Hiccup's wound is too serious to sustain a long boat trip. He wouldn't..." But the Chief's voice hitches and he trails off. His tired, green eyes sink downward to the ground and he suddenly looks exhausted. His hands are still stained red from Hiccup's blood...

Gobber frowns deeply at the sight of his friend. He places a hand on Stoick's shoulder and squeezes supportively. "Maybe I should stay behind with ya' and-"

"No." Stoick shakes him off and stands up, once again the proud Chief who is quite adept at swallowing his emotions. "I need you to lead the others to safety. I'm counting on you, Gobber."

"And where, exactly, should I take them?" The Blacksmith wonders, even though he's already pretty sure what Stoick will say.

And surely enough, Hiccup's father lets out a huge sigh and plants his hands on his hips. "It's risky...I'm not sure how reliable he'll be in this situation but...I think Outcast Island is our best option now. Alvin claims he's on our side so we'll just have to trust him."

"Hmph." The old Blacksmith snorts. "Trust a man named Alvin the Treacherous? I was afraid you were gonna say that..."

"He's our only hope, Gobber." Stoick whispers. "And he's got an army

to back us up. The invaders won't dare go there after losing their commander. You'll be safe there."

"And what are you going to do, exactly?"

Stoick nods and glances over his shoulder at the shape of his son stretched out on the sand, his torso all wrapped up in bandages and the skin of his bare chest stained red with the same blood as on his father's hands. For only a single arrow, the boy bled a lot...

Hiccup has been unconscious ever since he was shot, which is a small blessing in and of itself. He wouldn't enjoy the sight of his dragon whimpering and whining and desperately nuzzling his Rider to wake him, nor the tears that streamed down Astrid's cheeks when she saw him go down. It would break his heart to see his friends in so much pain... But now, Toothless has wrapped himself around his friend, acting like a shield to anything that would want to hurt his little Hiccup. And he isn't the only one...

"I'm going to stay here until Hiccup wakes up. Hopefully by that time, he'll be capable of the trip and we'll be able to join you." Stoick explains. A long silence follows as both men stare at the trio sitting further up on the beach. Hiccup, wrapped inside Toothless's protective wings, and Astrid...

"Is she staying too?" Gobber asks.

"No. She needs to go to Outcast Island with the other Riders..." Stoick replies dully.

"Well, someone has to tell her that." The Blacksmith reminds him, his expression glum as he watches Hiccup's friend. Astrid is sitting beside Toothless, her battle-axe in hand, as if ready to jump to his protection at any time...

Stoick nods, knowing Gobber is right. And he has a feeling the news will go over better with her if it's Hiccup's father who tells it to her. So he slowly crosses the sandy stretch between them, stopping a few feet from her. He parts his lips to speak but is almost immediately cut off.

"I'm not leaving." She informs him stiffly. "It will be safer for him if I stay too." Her expression softens for just a moment as she glances over her shoulder at the frail boy behind her, her lips tugging down even further than before.

"I'm sorry, Astrid." The Chief sighs. "But you have a responsibility to the other Riders and-"

"They can take care of themselves." She snaps defensively.

"-and I need you to go with Gobber to Outcast Island in case something goes wrong." He continues despite the interruption. When Astrid doesn't reply, he groans and kneels down in front of her. Placing a hand on the girl's shoulder, he frowns when she suddenly snaps her head in the other direction, refusing to look at him. "Astrid...please, don't make this harder than it already is." He whispers. "I need someone I can count on to keep an eye on the dragons. And you're the best I've got right now."

She lowers her eyes, obviously defeated but still reluctant to leave.

"You're a strong girl, Astrid. I know you can do this." Stoick concludes. "I'll bring Hiccup to the island as soon as he's able to stand the trip. I promise."

However, when Astrid next speaks, it almost doesn't even sound like her. Where her voice usually sounds firm and confident, now there's only doubt and fear. "But what if something happens here? What if you need help? What if he needs help?!" She cries, jabbing an almost accusatory finger in Hiccup's direction. "What if...what if he doesn't make-

"Stop." Stoick barks, cutting her off. "Hiccup is not going to die, Astrid! He just needs more time to heal and he'll be good as new!"

She frowns and suddenly shakes off his hand before aggressively jumping to her feet. "Fine." She growls. "If you say so, Chief. I just hope you know what you're doing..." With that, she stalks away toward the ships where her dragon is waiting. The other Riders stare at her with confused expressions but don't question her, only obediently mounting up when she coldly orders them to. Even Tuffnut and Ruffnut can tell this is no time for fooling around...

While the teens prepare to take off, Gobber hobbles over once more. He tries to smile at Stoick when he says, "I'll keep an eye on them."

"Thank you..." The other man replies darkly.

"Just try to join us as soon as possible. We'll leave a ship anchored a little ways off shore, where the invaders won't see it."

Stoick only nods, his eyes tight.

After a long moment of tense silence, Gobber sighs and turns around to go back to his own ship. "Alright then." He grumbles before walking off, his head shaking sadly. I hope you know what you're doing, Stoick.

Then, everyone is boarded on the ship and it pulls away from the lonely little beach. Although their retreat is a slow one, even the winds seem reluctant to carry them without the presence of their Chief and Heir onboard as well. The dragons hover above mast, all the Riders staring down at their wounded friend as he's carefully lifted by Stoick and carried to a safer place where they can lay low until he wakes up.

..._if_ he wakes up.

* * *

><p>AN: Yeah, they might be OOC...I don't know. But! I hope you enjoyed and don't forget to REVIEW! **_

_**I don't see this being a very long fanfic, just enough to wrap up the plot and all that. (Although the climax is going to be a doozy...

XD) See you next chapter, guys! **_

**(Sorry for the wait by the way...for anyone who didn't see it on my profile or PM me and ask the release date, I was very sick for about week and couldn't do anything but lay on my bed and sleep for the majority of that time. Thanks for your patience and I hope this turns out to be worth the wait!)**

2. In the Tunnels

**Chapter Two**

**A/N: These first two chapters are kind of set-up for what's to come. Just bear with me for a while. :) Also lots of fatherly!Stoick...**

**In response to...**

Yondaime Namikaze: **Ugh, yeah. The rain is terrible here as well (my backyard is pretty much a lake at this point). And yay! I'm glad you thought they were in character, despite everything. Yes, yours was the first review and it totally brightened my day because I got it during my first class (which is always the best time for good news, since I'm so sleepy XD)**

InfinitiumAce: **Eh, that's alright :) Don't risk your education too much! That stuff's important XD **

_XxPinkMustancexX: **Yep, this one was a guest review though and they made the 'arrow to the knee' joke from Skyrim. LOL!
**_

NightFury999: **Thank you and thank you :D Always makes me happy to hear you guys like my stories/think I'm a good writer! **

Blue - The First Traveller: **I won't lie...tormenting you guys is one of the bright spots of my day... LOL! Sorry, though, it's nothing personal! XD I'm glad you felt that uncertainty vibe that I was trying to portray in the chapter. And...WOW! Thank you! I do want to be an author (other than the financial instability)...**

Breyannia: **Thanks :) And you'll get all your answers soon enough! (And thank you again! That's such a big compliment! I'm glad you enjoy them enough to read more than once as well.)**

LittleDragonRider: **It has something to do with the season finale of Defenders of Berk (but in case you haven't seen it yet, I won't spoil too much.) And you'll find that out soon!**

_Foxlight The Dragon Trainer: **Yay! I'm glad you like it so far!
:D**_

Guest: **Thanks :)**

* * *

><p>The tunnel system that runs below the Hooligan village is much

longer than Stoick had originally anticipated. Then again, it was carved out by Whispering Deaths so of course it's unruly and expansive beyond his expectations. But in a way, this is a good thing. Its labyrinth-like immensity will be a safe place to hide, if nothing else. The invaders probably don't even know it's here, twisting along below their feet, let alone think to search it for refugees.<p>

So the Chief trudges down a corridor, Toothless occasionally firing off plasma blasts to light their way as they look for a place to set up the supplies they've brought with them. They'll probably be here for at least a few more days...might as well make the most of it.

Eventually, they reach a wider space in the tunnel that almost resembles a cave, hidden deep within the island's core. "What do you think, Toothless?" Stoick mumbles. "Seems good enough to me."

The Night Fury drones quietly and paces up beside his Rider's father, emerald eyes gazing at the boy in his arms. Just by looking at those eyes, Stoick can almost hear the question out loud. 'What are we going to do with him?'

"Gothi has done all she can for him...so he just needs to rest more than anything." Stoick explains as he walks to the opposite end of their 'cave', where a small indentation in the wall almost creates an alcove-of-sorts. He carefully shifts Hiccup's weight to one arm, gently cradling the injured teen against his chest as he shrugs off his cape and sets it down on the hard stone. Once Hiccup has been laid down on the cape and his father is sure he'll be safe, he turns back to Toothless, who is whimpering sadly at the sight of his friend in such bad shape. "Keep an eye on him while I set everything else up, would you...?"

The dragon obediently slinks over, cooing softly in Hiccup's ear and nuzzling his cheek, his breath rustling the boy's hair. He glances over his shoulder at Stoick and lowers his head like a nod, sitting down beside his friend and resting his chin lightly on Hiccup's stomach.

"Thank you." The man replies stiffly, his voice a bit too stern to be true. He's still hiding behind that Chiefly, proud exterior... But with that, he turns and quickly retraces his steps back toward the beach, where he left a few more things they'll need until they're able to join the other Vikings on Outcast Island.

Once he's gone, Toothless returns his attention to Hiccup. He lifts his reptilian head and moves closer to his human, sniffing the boy's cheek worriedly, only to recoil slightly at the overwhelming scent of blood that clings to his skin. It's not a smell that should be associated with Hiccup... Neither is the sight of such sickly pale skin and deathly stillness. If it weren't for the subtle movements of his chest, Hiccup wouldn't even look alive.

And even though he is alive, Toothless still finds himself whimpering sorrowfully over his friend. Maybe it's the knowledge that Hiccup got shot trying to help him...or maybe it's the way he'd seen Astrid truly panic for the first time... Whatever it is that's making him so afraid and nervous, he just wants it to be over. He just wants to see Hiccup wake up so they can return to the others of

their tribe, where Hiccup will really be safe. Because as much as Stoick wants to believe it, they're not safe down here. They won't be safe until they join the other Hooligans. That much, Toothless is sure of.

* * *

><p>A small fire pit flickers in the center of the cave, lighting the walls with a dancing, amber glow. Perched above the campfire, Stoick has placed a makeshift rack where a rabbit is now cooking in the flames. The scent, which would normally be intoxicating to any dragon, goes almost unnoticed by Toothless. He refuses to leave Hiccup's side, even when Stoick assures him the boy will be okay and he doesn't need to worry. Toothless still refuses to budge.<p>

It's with a weary sigh that Stoick finally climbs back to his tired feet and trudges over to his son's Night Fury, holding out the cooked animal to him. "Stubborn beast." He grumbles as he sets it on the floor for the dragon to eat at his leisure. And Toothless purrs gratefully, his stomach suddenly feeling remarkably empty. He opens his mouth, fangs sliding in through his gums as he leans down to eat...but he pauses.

The dragon's ears twitch curiously, his head tilting when he realizes Stoick hasn't moved. He's still standing there...his eyes hanging sadly over the frail form of his son.

Hiccup... Stoick steps around Toothless, who watches him out of the corner of his eyes. The older Viking sits carefully on the edge of the stone shelf, not wanting to jolt his son when he so desperately needs to heal. With an uncharacteristic amount of caution and gentleness, Stoick brushes his son's bangs aside, clearing them from his closed eyes. There are shadows below them, as if Hiccup hasn't slept in weeks. It's hard to imagine that only a few hours ago, this same wounded boy saved Stoick's life, as well as all of the villagers.

With a low coo, Toothless lifts his head and stares at Stoick, his breath once again puffing across Hiccup's cheek in a vain attempt to wake him. Except this time...maybe it isn't in vain.

At the feeling of calloused fingers running across his forehead and the burst of hot air on his cheek, Hiccup suddenly stirs. His head lulls to the side and he moans quietly, eyes squeezing shut as if reluctant to let him wake up.

Stoick gasps, his own eyes widening. "Hiccup?" He asks urgently. "Can you hear me?"

Toothless whines in the boy's ear, also trying to lead him back to consciousness.

"Come on, son." Stoick presses. "Wake up."

And after one more dragging moment of suspense...there's another twitch of the boy's eyes...and then they flutter open, revealing a glazed green that doesn't seem to see anything.

"Hiccup...?" Stoick whispers as he moves to kneel on the ground before his son, one hand tightly clasping Hiccup's.

The dazed teen blinks tiredly, gazing around the small cave with a look of disorientation and, eventually, bewilderment once his eyes come back into focus. "Dad?" He croaks, his voice slightly hoarse.

And at the sound of it, Toothless screeches in joy and jumps to his feet. The Night Fury bounding across to one end of the cave and then back again, wings flapping and tail swinging wildly, despite the slight limp of bandaged back leg. His entire body seems to wiggle in bliss as he moves closer to his friend and sniffs his hair, purring quite loudly.

Stoick's weary face lifts into a smile at the sight of Hiccup's weak laughter when the dragon nuzzles his forehead against his Rider's. "My boy..." He breathes in relief. "How do you feel?"

Hiccup pauses and seems to think about that for a moment. How does he feel? Weak, for one thing. And...confused and a bit disoriented. There's also a dull throb in his right shoulder but it's so distant he can hardly even tell it's there. "I'm fine, Dad." He replies.

Stoick nods but still looks thoughtful. "No pain?"

"Pain...?" Hiccup mutters, his brow knotting quizzically. "No...not much. Why?" Although the more he thinks about it, the more he feels like he's forgetting something. Like he should feel pain...so why doesn't he?

"Hiccup, don't you remember?" His father asks him. "The reason you were unconscious...?"

I was unconscious...? But then, as if someone opened the flood gates, his memory comes pouring back. Toothless had been injured, shot by one of the guards...and then he rushed to help him and... He suddenly shivers, reminded of the feeling of the arrow stabbing through his body. "Yes, I remember..." He whispers. "I got shot."

Stoick nods, his expression almost apologetic. "I guess Gothi's pain elixir helped after all... She said it was the strongest she could make...under the circumstances."

Shaking the dark feeling from his mind, Hiccup smiles tiredly at his father. "Yeah, I don't even feel it." He agrees, shifting his weight to try and sit up. But his dad immediately holds him back down.

"No, you need to rest, Hiccup." He says. "The sooner you regain your strength, the sooner we can go join the others."

"The others?" Hiccup asks. "Where are the others?" His eyes narrow when he notices the guilty look on his dad's face.

"I sent them ahead." He explains. "I knew you wouldn't be able to handle a long voyage so we stayed behind."

"What?!" Hiccup gasps, almost in outrage. "You let them go alone?! What if they get attacked?!" This time, he struggles away from his father's grip and manages to sit up...for just a moment before his

vision begins to buckle in front of him. It's like his head is full of water and his ears are stuffed with cotton.

"Just relax!" Stoick orders sharply, pushing the boy's shoulders back down onto the makeshift bed. "The others will be fine. The Riders are with them and they'll fight off anything that might attack." His voice softens again when he says, "Let me worry about the villagers. You just need to focus on getting your strength back so we can go find them."

Hiccup wants to argue with him, to tell him he's already strong enough and they need to go find their tribe now. But by the sudden weakness in his limbs and the spinning of his head, he seriously doubts he could get on a boat for five minutes without throwing up, let alone all the way to- Wait... "Where...where did they go?" He stammers, closing his eyes because they've gotten too heavy for him.

"Don't worry about that now, Hiccup." Stoick grumbles. "They're safe, I assure you of that." Then, the older Viking stands up and shuffles back toward the fire pit. "Go back to sleep, son." He tells him. "You're pale as a ghost."

And Hiccup doesn't need anymore encouragement than that. His heavy, leaden body reclines into the soft cape below him and within seconds, he drifts off into a deep, dark sleep.

3. Second Thoughts

Chapter Three

A/N: The first section here is told in past tense instead of present tense, like I usually write. That's because it's basically Astrid's memory so I thought it would sound odd written in present tense. (Thought I'd clear that up because I, myself, am really picky about grammar and correct tense-usage.)

In response to...

A random surprise: **I don't know why but the word 'feisty' got me chuckling XD Just Hiccup being 'feisty' is a funny thought... (Sorry, it's currently very late and I feel a bit silly.) THANKS! XD**

NightFury999: **Thank youu! :D**

Yondaime Namikaze: **Lol, well I don't have an internet-ready phone so I check on my iPod. Plus my teachers know I'm a decent kid so they don't care that I occasionally check my stories during class. And yeah, the title will come into play pretty soon here. (I hope...my outlines aren't cooperating lately.)****

>

LittleDragonRider: **Oh, okay. Well I'll *try* not to spoil too much. :)**

* * *

><p>When that arrow hit him, she was sure he was dead. By the angle at which she had been standing, it looked like it had gone straight through his chest and probably pierced his heart. So naturally, Astrid had been frozen. Her feet planted firmly on the ground as if demonic hands had come up from the earth and grabbed her ankles. She couldn't move, even when Stoick raced to his son's side and sunk down to the ground beside him. She couldn't look away either, even when the grass was stained red with her friend's blood and the other Hooligans were surging forward to see if he was alright.<p>

For the longest time, she couldn't move. Couldn't breathe. It was like, until she knew if he was alive, her body was set on dying along side him. She felt a sharp throbbing in her chest, like someone was gouging at her heart with a knife. If Hiccup was dead...so was she. Maybe she wouldn't be physically dead like he was...but she would be dead all the same.

* * *

><p>"Astrid." It's Gobber's voice that interrupts her thoughts. She looks down at him from where she's seated on the long arm of the mast, Stormfly perched far above her. Her expression, unlike before, is nearly blank. When she speaks, her voice is monotone, uncaring.<p>

"What?" She grumbles, her eyes staring straight out across the water. She doesn't want to deal with anyone else right now. She doesn't want to be kept in the loop and informed of how close they are to their destination. She just wants to go back to Berk...and if she had a single moment to herself where no one would watch her, she would hop on Stormfly and go straight back there. ...back to Hiccup.

The Blacksmith can see this written on her intentionally emotionless face. She isn't as good at hiding her feelings as she thinks she is. But he needs to tell her this. So he opens his mouth and says it anyway. "I know you're worried sick up there...but I need you and the other Riders to fly the rest of the distance to Outcast Island and tell Alvin we're coming. Wouldn't want him thinking this is an offensive move or anything..."

For a long while, Astrid only continues to sit up there, her arms folded across her chest and her eyes staring out across the ocean. She doesn't move.

And finally, Gobber sighs in irritation. "Oh for Thor's sake, Astrid!" He growls. "I always knew you were an emotional girl but I didn't think you were the type to throw a tantrum!"

"WHAT?!" She gasps in outrage. "A tantrum?! I am NOT throwing a tantrum!" Now, she spins around on the mast so her feet are dangling off the narrow edge, her expression fierce as she glares down at her former instructor.

"Then why are you sulking up there all alone?" He demands. "If you're going to be angry, then at least make yourself useful."

She growls furiously but calls Stormfly down, jumping into the saddle so her dragon can lower her down to the deck of the ship. She stomps over to Gobber, her eyes aflame with anger. "I am not throwing a tantrum and I'm not sulking!" She snarls without dismounting her

Nadder. "I just..." But her voice trails off, her face momentarily twisting into a look more akin to despair than fury. However, as quickly as that vulnerability surfaces, it disappears. Once more replaced by a stony shell. "Fine." She sighs, obviously done arguing. "I'll gather everyone else..."

Gobber watches as she and Stormfly flap over to where the other Riders are seated, talking quietly among themselves. She says a few words to them and they all mount up without a word. A few seconds later, they're all flying off in the direction of Outcast Island...and Gobber releases a huge sigh. _This is why I'm not cut out to be Chief...Stoick needs to get here soon._

* * *

><p>Their cave has gotten darker since the sun fell outside, shadows now obscuring any view of the beach beyond their hiding place. The only source of light is now the dimly crackling fire which Toothless continually keeps burning from where he lays beside Hiccup.<p>

But it's been hours since the boy fell asleep and he hasn't stirred once. Stoick is sitting on the opposite side of the cave, sharpening his axe with a small stone...but his focus is becoming more and more diverted as time ticks on. Hiccup hadn't seemed to be in that bad of shape when he woke a few hours ago...Stoick has been expecting him to rouse for quite a while now... But his son never moves, never wakes.

With a suspicious frown on his face, Stoick sets his axe down and climbs to his feet. Crossing the stone floor, he kneels beside Hiccup and gently takes his shoulder, shaking it ever so carefully. "Hiccup." He whispers, not wanting to startle his son. "Hiccup, wake up."

...seconds drag on and Hiccup doesn't respond. He only continues to lay there, motionless save for the steady movements of his chest. Stoick sits back, a grave look on his face.

_He's unconscious again... _He realizes grimly, lifting a hand to run it through his hair. With a deep sigh, he stands up and glances at Toothless. The dragon is watching his Rider very closely. He must know Hiccup isn't going to wake up again anytime soon. "I should have known it was too early for him to wake up." Stoick grumbles. "It takes longer than just a few hours to recover from something like that." But even as he says it out loud, Stoick can't fight the disappointment that settles in his chest like a rock. He'd been so hoping Hiccup would recover quickly so they could go to the other Hooligans...

Just then, Toothless's ears perk up and he jumps to his feet. Wide, green eyes staring straight at Hiccup as he quietly whimpers and nudges the boy's cheek.

"Toothless?" Stoick wonders. "What's the matter?"

Then, as if to answer his question, a low moan escapes Hiccup's throat. His face contorts in pain and his breaths begin to hitch...

"Hiccup..." Stoick breathes. He hurries to his son's side once again,

placing a hand on his forehead and moving the bangs away from the boy's suddenly sweaty brow. "Hiccup, are you okay?" He asks, even though he knows he won't get a reply.

The wounded boy's eyes squeeze tightly shut, another strained groan sounding in his throat. His skin feels remarkably cool and clammy, especially for having come on so quickly...

"Hic-" Stoick begins to say again but is cut off by the sudden, pained lurch of his son's body and the shocking gasp that breaks from his previously silent mouth.

Toothless wheels backwards in surprise at his Rider's spasm, his expression suddenly fearful. However, Stoick only continues to sit there beside his son. The man's face drawn in sorrow as he recalls what Astrid said to him earlier.

_ 'What if he doesn't make it?' _

Earlier, he'd quickly assured her Hiccup wasn't going to die...but now... He can only hope he was right.

4. Aelius

**Chapter Four**

**A/N: Fun fact! I was very close to naming the assassin Gallus until I realized where I knew that name from... Yup, I DO mean Skyrim. XD It was a huge disappointment that I had to change the name but also very amusing that I nearly named my assassin after a member of the Thieve's Guild! LOL!**

**In response to...**

InfinitiumAce: **Yeah, they're not going back to Berk just yet and Astrid needs to stay with the others...**

NightFury999: **YOU'LL FIND EVERYTHING OUT SOON! XD I promise! But for now, no spoilers!**

Breyannia: **The enemy's movements will become clear within the coming chapters and you'll get the answers to your questions soon :)**

OinkyThePiggy: **Yeah, he's still got a lot of healing to do before he'll be back on his feet, that's for sure.**

Jo: **Thanks :) And yes, the title will play a part later.**

PT: **You'll see~**

LittleDragonRider: **Lol, I know...it is my way. Sorry.**

Yondaime Namikaze: **Yeah that is something she would do. And I know, poor Hiccup! :(**

* * *

><p>" -just don't know what to do..." His father's voice echos through the small cavern, bouncing off the walls and slamming into Hiccup's ears as if they were made of stone. His head begins to pound and he groans softly, even his throat feeling incredibly weak. He can feel the hard rock below him, cushioned by his dad's cape, smell a hint of smoke in the air, as well as the throbbing ache that has greatly intensified in his right shoulder...

_Ohh...where am I? _Hiccup wonders dully, his eyelids flickering with the struggle to open. But once they do, he finds himself staring at the earthy ceiling above him. Grass roots and little pebbles suspended in the dirt, appearing as if this very tunnel had been hastily carved out. _Oh yeah...we're in a cave or something. _He recalls, remembering the brief reunion he shared with his father. How long ago was that...? Minutes? Hours? He can't tell... And as he lays there, sluggishly turning his head toward the main part of the cave, he finds himself disturbingly alone. Where is his father? He knows he heard his voice just now.

With a concerned frown, he plants the heel of his palm on the 'bed' and tries to push himself up. His head swims dangerously but he manages to get upright, only then allowing himself a moment to sit there and catch his breath. Grimacing, the wounded boy clasps a hand over his screaming shoulder, swallowing his urge to cry out in pain.

"Dad...?" He croaks in the loudest voice he can manage...although it's barely above a whisper. He cranes his neck, squinting through blurred vision as he attempts to search the cave without getting up. He knows his legs won't be able to support him for long. However, just looking with his eyes proves impossible. Nearly every few feet, there is another tunnel that winds off into darkness, a new possibility for where his dad could be waiting. He can't see it all from where he's sitting. So, of course, that only leaves one option...

With a strained sigh, Hiccup lowers his eyes to the ground. His body is already trembling with exhaustion and all he's done is sit up. But for the first time since he was shot, he gets a good look at himself. His chest is bare, wrapped in thick bandages. There appears to be dried blood on his right shoulder, where that terrible pain is emanating from. His back aches from a mixture of sleeping on rock and the multiple bruises he can feel there, probably from falling when he passed out. But the strangest thing is the amount of dark red, aged blood that is stuck in the bolts and screws of his prosthetic. Just how much did he bleed...?

With a weary, pained moan, he gives one last-ditch effort and calls for his father again. But just as before, he receives no answer. _Dad, where are you? _He wonders as he struggles to the edge of his perch, arms shaking uncontrollably as he moves. He feels so terribly, astoundingly weak. Like all the life has been sucked out of him. He can feel himself swaying back and forth as he finally climbs to his feet.

* * *

><p>Stoick had decided that this conversation would be easier if they weren't in the same room as his wounded son. He knows this man is the only reason he and Hiccup are even alive...but it still makes him

wary to have him around his son, knowing his... 'profession'. So they moved to the adjacent tunnel and proceeded with their meeting, talking in low voices despite being the only ones here.<p>

The assassin, who Hiccup had released from prison in order to help save Stoick's life, is now leaning casually against the rocky wall, his arms folded over his broad chest. The man's face is remarkably pale and littered with scars, his eyes as black as the hood that now lays around his neck but as sharp and dangerous looking as the weapons strapped to his thighs. He smiles at Stoick...but it's not a friendly smile. "I'll get right on it." He assures the Chief in a gravelly voice, rich with a lust for blood that makes Stoick's skin crawl. He's suddenly glad this assassin is on his side...

But of course, Stoick doesn't show that he's more than slightly intimidated. Instead, he nods curtly and says, "Please do. We don't have a lot of time to work with."

And so the assassin stands upright and moves away from the wall, his expression suddenly shifting to a more humane one. There's a deep curiosity burning in his onyx eyes when he whispers, "Your boy is Hiccup, right?"

Stoick stiffens a bit, his throat thickening just at the mention of his son, who is currently lying unconscious in the next room. "Yes." He confirms in a tense voice. But why is he asking? He must have seen him when he came through the cave earlier...

The assassin, who goes by the name Aelius nowadays, nods his head as well. Dark, shaggy bangs falling over his eyes. "You're worried about him, aren't you?" He asks in an almost accusatory tone.

"Yes, I am a bit worried for him..." The boy's father admits, his expression softening for a moment.

Aelius inclines his head again, almost looming down over Stoick. "Good." He mumbles. "Because I know he was worried for you..."

Stoick frowns, not liking the insinuation there...and he opens his mouth to say something about it...when he hears a sound behind him. Whipping around almost defensively, half-expecting to see one of the invading soldiers or some other threat...he suddenly freezes when his eyes fall on the frail, trembling form of his son leaning on the wall behind them.

"Hiccup..." He breathes as his eyes grow wide and his face twists with a million conflicting emotions. His son only offers a tired, relieved smile at the sight of him and braces himself against the wall so he won't fall over. And at that moment, Stoick doesn't care if it means showing weakness in front of Aelius. He almost runs to his child's side, immediately placing a firm hand in the center of Hiccup's back and pulling him in for the tightest embrace he can manage without hurting the boy. "What are you doing up?!" He demands, although his tone is too soft to be very reprimanding.

Hiccup seems to hesitate before answering but when he speaks, his voice is hoarse, like before, and barely audible. "I heard you talking..." He admits. "Figured I'd come see what's..." But he suddenly trails off as his gaze finds the assassin standing on the

other side of the tunnel, his frightening features illuminated by the orange glow of a lantern. With a worried and slightly fearful expression, he looks back at Stoick, his question clearly written on his face. _'What is he doing here?!'_

"I'll explain everything later." His father assures him with a comforting squeeze of his good shoulder. "But for now, you shouldn't be walking around yet." He straightens and turns back to Aelius. "I'm going to take my son back now. We can finish this conversation later."

And the other man nods, strictly. "That's fine. There are some things I want to do tonight anyway. We'll talk later." And with that, he strides past Stoick and Hiccup and down another tunnel, leading in the opposite direction of their cave. Where he could be going, neither of them know.

"Dad...that's-" Hiccup begins, only to be cut off by his father effortlessly scooping the boy into his arms so he won't have to waste energy walking back.

"I know who it is." He assures him. "But don't worry, he's on our side."

Hiccup frowns but doesn't say anymore. By now, they've returned to their 'camp' and Stoick carefully sets him down on the floor against the wall, earning him a questioning stare from his son.

"I want you to try to eat something." He explains. "You've been out for too long and need some nourishment."

Which raises the question... "How long _have_ I been unconscious?" Hiccup asks him, grimacing slightly at the nauseated churn his stomach gives at the thought of eating.

His father sighs as he tears off a few good-sized hunks of meat from a platter sitting near the fire -it must have been something he caught earlier in the day- and hands it to Hiccup. "About two days." He mutters, causing his son's mouth to fall agape.

"Two days?!" Hiccup gasps, purposefully ignoring the food. "But I was just awake a few hours ago..."

Stoick shakes his head. "The last time you woke up was two days ago, only a few hours after we fled the village and came here."

"It's been two days..." The boy mumbles, trying to wrap his mind around the lost time. So much could have happened. "What about the others?!" He presses. "Are they okay? Do you even know?!"

"They're fine." Stoick tells him, pointing to the cooked rabbit in his son's hands. He needs to eat. "They have Gobber and the Riders to protect them. I have confidence that they've reached Outcast Island safely."

Hiccup sputters once again, his pale face twisted in confusion and bewilderment. "OUTCAST ISLAND?! YOU SENT THEM TO OUTCAST ISLAND?!"

"Yes, I did." He confirms. "Alvin is our ally now, Hiccup. You have

to get used to that."

"Dad!" Hiccup groans. "Have you forgotten everything he did in the past?! Do you really think he's just going to turn around and help us now?!"

"He will." Stoick nods. "I know he will."

"How, Dad?! How could you possibly know that?!" Now, Hiccup has completely forsaken his attempt to eat or relax. Now, he's just outraged that his father would be so careless and put their people in the direct line of potential danger.

"Because I know Alvin." Stoick reminds him, suddenly determined. "He's done unforgivable things in the past, I know. Believe me, I know... But he's the best we've got now and he knows if he does anything stupid, it will mean a full-out war. One he can't win. Besides," And then, Hiccup's father looks thoughtful. "He saved your life, Hiccup. He saved all of our lives but most importantly he saved yours. And I know he's endangered you more times than he's protected you but...to a father, anyone who saves their child is worth a second chance..."

Hiccup only sits there in silence, soaking all that in. He doesn't know what he'll do if his father is wrong and something happens to their tribe...but for now, he supposes he can trust his dad. At least until he's feeling up to going to Outcast Island and finding out himself whether they're okay or not. So for now, he just nods and accepts the water pouch his father prods him to take. "Okay..." He mumbles. "I'll give Alvin a chance."

* * *

><p>AN: It's not very often that I say this...but I liked this chapter. And I hope you guys did too! Don't forget to review and let me know what you thought! :D**_

**Also...ONE MORE MONTH UNTIL HTTYD 2!**

5. Determinations

**Chapter Five**

**A/N: I was experimenting pretty hard with Alvin's accent in this chapter so if it's hard to read or you guys prefer less written-accent, let me know and I'll lighten up a bit :)**

**In response to...**

InfinitiumAce: **Thanks, I liked the name too :) It's funny because it sounds like alias which is something someone undercover would use XDDD Wow I'm a dork. Anyway, the name Aelius means sun which I thought was comically ironic for an assassin...so I used it XD And don't worry, Astrid will be here soon!**

NightFury999: **D: BUT HTTYD IS AMAZING! I don't understand how anyone could think it's stupid. But whatever, everyone has their opinions. I'm glad you liked the chapter! :)**

XxPinkMustachexX: **Oooh, New York? Fancy! And ugh, I envy all you people with your reliable wifi. I can only check my fanfics at home or my grandmother's house. (Occasionally school as well, if the student internet is available.)**

A random surprise: **Thanks! And yay! :D I love it when you guys think the characters sound genuine!**

Jesusfreak: **Heh...well don't get used to the lack-of-pain. Remember, he'd been totally stationary and under the influence of a pain elixir... And yes, you probably should be at this point XD**

Breyannia: **You'll find out what he's up to eventually... and Toothless's location will be explained soon.**

Yondaime Namikaze: **Like I told Breyannia, the whole ordeal with Toothless will be explained. (Hiccup WAS wondering, I just didn't mention it because that would have led into a whole other thing and it just flowed better to explain it in this chapter than try to put everything together at once.) And no worries, your review made perfect sense XD **

* * *

><p>"So Stoick needs mah help, is that et?" Alvin the Treacherous stands on the beach of his island, smiling a black-toothed grin at Astrid and the other Riders. "Well it'd be mah pleasure to accommodate you in your time o' need..." He purrs. "We're allies now, after all..."

Astrid grimaces, disgusted that she even has to talk to him. She knows that Alvin won't do anything stupid, not if it won't benefit him...but she still can't shake the dark vibes he gives off. Ally or no ally, he's still a creepy man who's done some very terrible things in his past... And once more, she finds herself wishing she could return to Berk to be with Hiccup instead of him coming here. Images of finding him here after he'd been kidnapped come rushing through her mind and her stomach boils with fury. It takes all of the strength in her body to growl the words "Thank you, Alvin" without clocking him in his ugly face.

"It's not a problem, Astrid." He assures her with a dark twinkle in his eye, before turning and strolling back up toward his village. No...he won't cause trouble this time. That would only put him in the line of fire of this invading army... Might as well hang onto his truce with Stoick for now...

* * *

><p>The tunnel is dark, nearly pitch black as Toothless trudges back to camp. He'd been making sure the entrance to their cave had gone undiscovered overnight and now his nerves feel only slightly better, knowing no one has found their hideout. At least Hiccup won't be in that kind of danger... The healing dragon doesn't even bother using his echolocation to see, he can smell the faint scent of smoke from the camp fire and even hear Stoick's voice as he draws closer.<p>

"-anyone who saves their child is worth a second chance." The Chief

says, causing Toothless to tilt his head thoughtfully. Who could he be talking to...? Has that assassin returned again? But no. It's not the assassin. That much becomes apparent the closer he gets.

It starts off very subtle, the sound of metal creaking softly...but that could be anything really. Then, his nose twitches when he realizes he smells something cooking, which is odd in and of itself. Stoick hasn't been eating much recently. But then, after a few moment's pause...Toothless's ears snap up, his gummy mouth falling open at the sound...

"Okay...I'll give Alvin a chance."

Hiccup...

Hiccup...!

Toothless screeches and starts to sprint, ignoring the ache in his back leg which is still trying to heal. His eyes narrow as he watches the dull glow of the cave ahead brighten and widen as he comes closer... And then-

Hiccup spins around, having heard the heavy footfalls of his dragon speeding down the tunnel to see him. The pale boy's face lifts into a relieved smile when he gasps, "Toothless!" his weak voice cracking.

Stoick grins as the dragon slides to a halt inches in front of Hiccup, just barely stopping himself from tackling the boy as he usually would. Toothless's entire body rumbles with purrs as he affectionately licks his friend's cheek, causing the injured boy to grimace and wipe the slobber away. But he doesn't voice his disgust, instead using his good arm to scratch his dragon's chin. Stoick can't hear what his son whispers to the Night Fury but by the look on his face, it's probably something along the lines of, "There you are. You had me worried, bud."

Toothless coos and turns his head, glancing over his shoulder at Stoick. Another one of those obvious questions playing in his intelligent eyes.

Hiccup's father smiles, understanding what the dragon wants to know and nodding his head. Yes. Hiccup is going to stay awake this time.

After receiving the answer he'd longed for, Toothless shrieks happily and nuzzles his Rider, who giggles in response and carefully moves his wounded shoulder so it won't be jolted. It hurts a lot more now than it did but he can still handle the pain as long as he doesn't move around too much. Speaking of which...

Hiccup glances up at his father, his expression suddenly darker as he continues to pet his dragon. "Dad...now that Toothless and I are both..._awake_ at least...maybe we should meet up with the others."

And Stoick frowns, slowly running a hand through his hair as he nods. "I was just thinking that..." He admits. "But I don't like the idea of trapping you on a boat when you've just woken up...you could still

get worse."

Hiccup sighs. "I know, Dad...but the villagers need their Chief." He reminds him. "You have a responsibility to them too..."

"I know that." His father assures him glumly. After a long, thoughtful silence, he finally comes to a decision. "Alright," He begins. "It's too bright to leave right now, we'd be spotted. So we'll leave once it's dark, that'll give us enough time to decide if you and Toothless will be able to stand the trip."

Hiccup nods. "Fair enough." He says as he lowers his eyes to stare distasteful at the food his father had once more insisted he eat. His stomach gives a sharp stab of defiance at the thought of swallowing anything right now...but he knows his dad is right. He needs to keep his strength up and besides...he has to convince his father he's strong enough to last until they get to Outcast Island. So, with a nervous gulp, he lifts the smoky hunk of rabbit and takes a timid bite. I ate raw fish for Toothless, so I can handle this! He reminds himself as he tries not to think about his nausea. Once it's finally managed to slither down his throat, he looks up at his dad.

Stoick smiles approvingly at the sight of Hiccup finally eating something and stands up. "Don't move around too much." He says. "You're going to need all the energy you've got to last until Outcast Island."

Hiccup grins weakly, fighting his urge to gag. Well, it worked...now I just have to NOT throw it back up...But as he leans back against the wall of the cave, absently stroking Toothless's back, he decides that'll probably be easier said than done.

* * *

><p>As the sun begins to set on their third day hiding on Outcast Island, Astrid finds herself sitting on the edge of the beach, her tired blue eyes watching the horizon with a longing expression. Every so often, the shadows of the sinking star will play tricks on her eyes and make her think she's seen a ship bobbing toward her on the waves...only to find out, moments later, that it was just a sea-gull or the ever-growing shadows behind the sea stacks flashing on the rocks. Each time it happens, she groans in disappointed despair.<p>

It wouldn't be so bad if she could just know...know that he's alive. But she can't know that. What if he never shows up? What if she never sees him again? Her heart aches just at the thought... If she knew he's alive, she would almost be comforted by the knowledge that he's safely tucked away on the familiar island of Berk, hidden from Alvin's clutches. But for now, roiling in the knowledge that she might never see Hiccup again, it takes all of her strength and every bit of her will power to keep her on this island.

For now, she'll wait here. But if Stoick and Hiccup don't arrive by tomorrow morning...she's going to Berk. Even if she has to go alone.

Chapter** Six**

**A/N: Okay...this fanfic might end up being longer than I'd anticipated. **

**In response to...**

InfinitiumAce: **Lol, XD Thanks. You'll find out about Astrid's decision in this chapter. And yeah, Alvin is definitely not one to blindly trust but I don't think he betray them either. (I don't know about a sequel but I guess we'll see where he we stand at the end of this fanfic). And haha, no, I don't think I'm reading your mind XD I just knew that Toothless not being in the last chapter would raise some questions which I wanted to answer. And that's fine, I understand not being able to review all the time.**

Vika: **Well I'm glad you're into it :D and yes, Alvin is a rather shady character. You never quite know what he'll do next...**

Jesusfreak: **Lol, like I said, the pain will come later. XD**

Yondaime Namikaze: **Yeah, he's a creepy dude alright. And thanks, I'm glad you have confidence in my no-plot-holes policy XD**

A random surprise: **Thanks :) And yeah, he's got it rough lately.**

NightFury999: **Haha, we'll see. And thanks :D Yes, of course I've seen that clip! (I've probably seen all of them because I'm constantly on Tumblr nowadays XD) DRAGON RACING LOOKS SO COOL! The black sheep~**

Breyannia: **Lol! Sort of ready... XD**

XxPinkMustachexX: **Yup... XD That seems to be a recurring theme in my fanfictions. And D: that's terrible! At least her husband helped her... Ugh, why can't wifi just be reliable...? **

* * *

><p>"Alright, it's clear." Stoick announces in a hushed voice as soon as he's sure there are no guards on the beach. The Chief turns back toward the cave and grimaces slightly at the sight of Hiccup and Toothless limping out into the moonlight. Both of them are in a bad way and he wishes he could keep them here longer...but his son had been right. He has a responsibility to the villagers as well and they must be nervous taking refuge on a former aggressive island without the guidance of their leader...<p>

And Hiccup can see the confliction on his father's face. So instead of succumbing to the ever-growing intensity of the pain in his shoulder, he straightens up and forces a smile to reassure his dad that's fine. Three hours... Three hours on a ship to get to Outcast Island. He glances over his shoulder at Toothless, who is still favoring his wounded leg and limping pretty badly. _I know I can do this...three hours isn't so long. But...can Toothless? He probably bled even more than I did... _Hiccup jumps slightly when Stoick

suddenly taps his arm.

"He'll be okay." His dad says, as if he'd read his son's mind.

"I sure hope so..." Hiccup replies quietly, scratching his dragon's ear. Then, shaking himself and trying to refocus, he turns back to the boat which Stoick has pulled onto shore. It's relatively small compared to most of their fleet but still large enough to carry himself, his four hundred pound father, and his five hundred pound** dragon.

Toothless coos reassuringly and nudges Hiccup forward, toward the boat. He winces slightly, however, at the sudden movement and clasps a hand over his shoulder, biting the inside of his cheek so he won't make a sound.

"Hiccup?" Stoick asks, seeing his son's pain.

"I'm fine." The boy tells him. "Let's just get to Outcast Island so we can meet up with everyone else and get this whole thing straightened out..." With that, he carefully hops over the side of tiny ship, signaling that he is ready to go.

Stoick and Toothless join him and soon, the waves and wind catch their ship and the three of them are sailing toward refuge.

* * *

><p>The sky is deep shade of violet, the horizon burning orange as the last of the sun sinks into oblivion. And for probably the hundredth time in an hour, Astrid finds herself sighing deeply.<p>

The Viking girl's knees are pulled up to her chest, her blue eyes staring intently into the distance. "I should have stayed behind, Stormfly." She mutters, drawing the attention of her Nadder, who squawks and nuzzles her Rider's head. "I know Stoick didn't want me to but if I'd argued enough, he would have let me... I should have stayed with them."

Her dragon warbles sadly and settles down beside her friend, one colorful wing fanning open and stretching around Astrid to comfort her.

"Thanks, Stormfly..." She sighs. And she knows her Nadder can't answer her questions but she still asks anyway...simply so she can voice them out loud and clear her head. "What would you have done?" She wonders. "Would you have given in and left like I did...? Or would you have stayed behind?"

Her dragon trills softly, not completely understanding what Astrid is saying to her but in-tune enough to know her friend needs comforting. So she folds down the spines on her head and nuzzles her Rider's cheek again, warbling deep in her throat like a mother bird.

However, this seems to do little to brighten Astrid's mood. And soon, the girl has climbed to her feet and is pacing the beach, her brow furrowed in thought. "I bet you would have stayed and protected him..." She decides. "But I just buckled and gave up... Now they're

three days late and I have no idea if he's even alive!"

Stormfly cocks her head, yellow eyes blinking curiously.

Without warning, Astrid stops pacing and stands there on the edge of the beach, her back to her dragon. The Viking's hands are placed firmly on her hips and her stance is strict. "Well I'm done waiting." She declares. "The Riders can handle themselves until I get back."

With that, she spins around and strides across the sand toward her dragon. Stormfly chirps in surprise when the girl suddenly hops into the saddle and taps her side, motioning for her to take flight.

"Come on, Stormfly. Let's go home." Astrid tells her as the Nadder turns her body to face in the right direction. "We're going to find Hiccup..." She braces herself as the bipedal dragon's wings unfurl and expand to their full length. The Nadder beats them a few times before gracefully lifting into the air and waiting for her Rider to give the command to take off. "Alright, let's-" But Astrid pauses, her eyes narrowing suspiciously. "What's that?" She wonders.

The object bobs up and down on the waves, just barely visible on the now star-littered horizon. Her first fear is that Ymir's army has found them and are here to finish them off...but then she realizes...that can't possibly be the case. There is only one ship and a small one at that... And as it draws closer and closer, she thinks she can see the Berk crest on the main sail...

Then, Astrid's heart gives a little jump and all the breath escapes her lips. Her eyes widen as the boat gets close enough that she can see the very familiar, bulky shape of her Chief...alongside a sleek, green-eyed dragon.

"It's them..." She whispers in a trembling voice, her gaze searching feverishly for Hiccup's thin frame. However, she doesn't find it. With a terrified wrench of her stomach, she pats Stormfly's side again and motions toward where the ship will dock. "Hurry, Stormfly!" She urges as panic begins to grip her throat. _Oh gods...please...please let him be okay!_

* * *

><p>By the time Astrid arrives, a small crowd has already gathered at the docks. Evidently, she isn't the only one who spotted their ship in the distance and now the area is bustling with Hooligans and Outcasts alike, all eager to find out if the trio survived. She's pretty sure she can even see Alvin himself standing on the lip of the beach, waiting to greet Stoick and, hopefully, Hiccup as well...<p>

And truth be told, Astrid could fly out there right now and see for herself if he's there. She could know in a matter of seconds whether or not her friend is alive... But she can't. She can't bring herself to speed this up. Because if he _is_...dead...she'd rather not know. She'd rather suffer without certainty than know he's really gone. That she'll never see him again. So instead, she waits on the beach like everyone else, her fists gripping the saddle so hard her hands shake.

And when the ship finally does land, she slides to the ground and carefully pushes her way through the crowd, shrugging past her fellow villagers and Outcasts alike. Through the spaces between them, she catches glimpses of a very weary looking Stoick climbing onto the dock. She sees Alvin grab the other Chief's forearm in a firm handshake as well as flashes of Toothless limping off the boat and looking questioningly at Stoick. But for what feels like a long time, it's only those two... No one else comes off the boat.

Her heart pounds in her chest and her hands are still shaking by the time she reaches the front of the crowd. She can see Stoick saying something to Alvin but his words are drowned out by the rumble of the other people and the hammering of her own head.

_Where is Hiccup...? _For a long, dragging, split-second Astrid is certain he must be gone. He got shot, she reasons. So she shouldn't be so surprised... He bled a lot, after all... So...so why can't she accept it? Why can't she believe Hiccup is really dead? Why can't she-

Suddenly, Stoick takes his hand back from Alvin and returns to the ship, where he reaches inside...and helps someone stand up. The someone is much paler than he should be and his hair is messier than usual. He's not wearing his tunic...or any shirt at all, just thick bandages that are stained with red, and his metal prosthetic seems to be almost too heavy for his weakened body to lift.

Stoick has to help the boy over the edge of the boat and onto the docks because he looks like he's about to topple over at any moment. But once he's been set down on his own two feet, he is able to stand there without any extra support...

And once more, Astrid finds her breath escaping her. Hiccup looks awful, like he's ready to simply keel over...but he still stands there beside his father, glancing about the crowd in front of him, who is cheering joyfully. He has a hand covering the wound on his shoulder, his frame slanted at a pained angle...but he still stands there on his own two feet.

Astrid lifts a hand to her mouth, her eyes misting over a little when it finally registers in her mind. _He's alive...!_

* * *

><p>AN: Sorry if the end of this chapter sounded odd. I wanted it to almost feel surreal or dreamlike but I'm not sure if I actually managed to pull that off. Also I apologize if Astrid seems out of character.**_

****In a past fanfic, I guessed that Toothless's weight was about 500 pounds, based on Hookfang's weight of 5,000 (Toothless seems to be half his size and without the presence of huge horns and talons, that would take weight off as well.) It's just a guess so I can't know for sure, but I do know that he's able to lift at least 500 (Stoick being 400 and Hiccup being about 90 pounds and he's able to carry them at the same time.)**

**Chapter Seven**

**A/N: This is basically just a Hiccstrid chapter. I'll honestly say nothing much plot-wise happens here, just fluffy, romantic goodness! Enjoy~**

**In response to...**

_InfinitiumAce: __**Lol, sorry about your hopes and feels. And yeah, I feel like the only times Astrid would be 'girly' or emotional would be in reaction to a Hiccup-related event. But I try to maintain some of that toughness most of the time. And don't worry, you'll get plenty of Hiccstrid in this chapter XD And yes...yes they do need a bigger boat XDDD**_

_NightFury999: __**Thanks, I'm glad you liked the change in POV :)**_

_A random surprise: __**Thank you! I'm glad you like it and enjoyed my attempt to give everyone mini-heart attacks XD**_

_Yondaime Namikaze: __**Good, I'm glad it didn't sound funky or anything. :D And yeah, you'll get your fill of Hiccstrid (hopefully).**_

_Breyannia: __**Haha, I feel like that's a pretty accurate portrayal of what he's probably doing XD And we'll see just how rude his wake up call shall be...**_

_Dragon rider xox: __**Great! I'm glad you're enjoying them :D**_

FictionalMe888:** Cool :D I'm glad you didn't find her OOC :)**

* * *

><p>When their ship arrives on Outcast Island and Stoick sees for himself that his people are safe and Alvin hasn't turned against them, he release a deep sigh of relief. Sailing into port, he is immediately greeted by the weary but cheerful faces of his tribesmen. The villagers look tired and eager to return to some kind of normalcy and the arrival of their Chief is a huge comfort to them.

But it's Alvin who is standing on the docks, waiting for them to land. He smiles through his scraggly beard, dark eyes shining in something akin to amusement. "Ahh, Stoick!" He calls over the roar of the waves. "It's about time ya' got 'ere! Had me worried there for a while...thought you'd gotten yerself caught or somethin'..." Alvin snickers to himself and steps back, allowing the other Chief room to jump off the boat.

"Well, _Alvin_, as you can see, I'm here now." He pauses for a moment before adding, "Thank you though...for allowing my people to take refuge here."

Stoick's former friend nods, still grinning to himself about something. That's when Toothless manages to limp onto the docks, wincing at every step. The voyage was rough on him and he'll need to

sleep this off for a while. Which seems to remind Alvin of something.

The Outcast's expression darkens and he leans in closer to Stoick.
"Did 'iccup...?"

Stoick shakes his head, not wanting to allow that thought to linger for any longer than it needs to. "He's fine." He assures him as he turns toward the ship, where he finds his son asleep on one of the benches. "Hiccup," Stoick calls as he reaches over to shake his shoulder. "We're here."

The boy's eyes flutter open and he yawns, offering his father a questioning look before he seems to register where they are. "Oh..." He grumbles, bracing his good arm against the bench and pushing himself up. But the movement sends jolts of searing pain through his shoulder and he flinches, eyes squeezing shut.

Seeing Hiccup's pain, Stoick reaches out to help him up. He takes his son's hand and pulls him to his feet, effortlessly lifting him over the side of the ship and onto the dock.

"Thanks, Dad..." Hiccup mutters as he finally regains his balance enough to stand on his own two feet. When Stoick releases him, he wavers slightly but doesn't fall, much to his satisfaction. But then...his eyes narrow when he notices who he's standing before. "Alvin..." He greets suspiciously.

"Ah, 'iccup!" The Outcast Chief booms as he raises a hand to smack Hiccup on the back...only to hesitate after receiving a warning glare from Stoick. "Oh, right..." He chuckles. "I almost forgot yer lit'le mishap."

Hiccup opens his mouth to say something, when he hears the sound of footsteps clunking down the dock in their direction... Turning carefully, so as not to jar his wound, he finds Astrid stalking toward him. With a rather intimidating look on her face. Her eyes look a little glassy, as if she were about to cry...but of course, Hiccup knows that can't be true. Vikings don't cry, after all. But she's still got a certain air about that says there's definitely something wrong.

"Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third!" She barks as she finally closes the distance between them.

"Uhh..." His eyes grow wide, a sudden instinctive fear growing within him from hearing her growl his full name like that. "Hi, Astrid...umm...what are you-" He flinches as her hand shoots out, sure that it's meant to connect him his arm. He can only pray that she hits the correct one...

Oddly enough, however, he doesn't feel her fist make contact with any part of his body. Instead, there's a sudden pressure around his good shoulder and, fleetingly, he realizes she's taken ahold of it. His heart skips a beat when he recognizes this motion... And surely enough, he stumbles forward as she yanks him toward her.

When their lips meet, however, all the familiarity is gone. His heart flutters dangerously fast and his face heats up. Astrid's other hand cups his cheek, while the first remains locked firmly on his

arm...and he can't help but simply melt. This kiss is different, he realizes distantly. There's no real urgency about it, like there always seemed to be before.

This kiss is slow and soft and lingering...warmth seems to blossom in every inch of his being and when they finally pull apart, it takes a moment for him to realize there's now space between them and he should probably open his eyes now. When he does, he's greeted by a slight smirk on her face and a glimmer in her blue eyes he doesn't ever recall seeing before.

He returns her smile, although he feels goofy even to himself. He's sure his face is probably too red and he's wobbling slightly, still a little off balance from his injury but now a bit swimmy-headed as well. But he's convinced the swimminess has nothing to do with the blood loss...it does, however, have everything to do with the girl standing in front of him.

Only now does Astrid release his shoulder and lower her hand from his cheek, her smiling broadening to one more of relief and unabashed joy. "It's about time you got here." She says quietly. Her tone, while almost scolding and motherly, is entirely conflicted by the slight trembling of laughter in her voice.

"Sorry." Hiccup replies slowly, his brain still fighting to return to its normally functioning state after having been the equivalent of mush for about five seconds there. "We got uh...held up." He explains coyly.

Astrid nods and her expression suddenly shifts to an ornery one. "Well I'm glad you finally decided to join us. It's about time too." She teases as she takes in his battered form, barely on his feet, and wrapped up like a mummy. But all the while he's grinning like an idiot, as if he's totally forgotten what kind of condition he's in. It's enough to almost make her laugh. "But you should probably go lay down before you fall down." She offers, extending her hand for him to take.

And Hiccup accepts it gratefully, not entirely convinced he'd be able to walk very far without some kind of assistance. She wraps her other arm around his waist to help him and, for some reason, that just gets his heart pumping again. _I need to take it easy... _He reminds himself, although he still can't push that dumb smile off his face. _It was quite the welcoming committee though..._

While Hiccup is lost in thoughts of Astrid, said girl turns to Stoick and smiles confidently. "I'll take him to a tent so he can rest." She tells the Chief, who nods and watches them go.

"Come on, Toothless!" Hiccup calls back, knowing his dragon will need to sleep too. But the Night Fury is looking back and forth between his Rider and Astrid, a suspicious look in his eyes. Hiccup frowns at him and shakes his head. "Let's go, bud. I'm sure it's not much further."

With an annoyed snort, Toothless stands up and limps after them, his ears folded back and his pupils mere slits as he tries to determine what exactly he just witnessed...

* * *

><p>Meanwhile, Stoick and Alvin are standing on the docks, watching the two teens...'reunite'. And as Hiccup and Astrid walk away toward the tents so he can rest, Alvin suddenly laughs to himself and shakes his head, earning a quizzical look from Stoick.<p>

"That girl..._Astrid_." The Outcast begins. "She reminds me of your Val... Just a stubborn mother-hen."

And Hiccup's father nods. "Well, you're right about that." He agrees. "But at times like these, Hiccup needs someone like that. He can be...reckless."

"Ahh, believe me, Stoick. I know how reckless your boy is." Alvin jokes with a shake of his head...although it goes over flat and earns him a glare from the other Chief. "Eh, lighten up!" He grumbles. "You and yer boy're safe, aren't ya'?"

"Yes, we are." Stoick nods, extending his arm to Alvin. "And for that, I can't thank you enough. For protecting my people...and my son. Again."

The Outcast leader hesitates, staring at Stoick's outstretched arm for just a moment...before he accepts it, shaking firmly as a smile crosses his face. "Oh c'mon, don't get all mushy on me, Stoick." He mutters, earning a chuckle from the other man. _I suppose for now, this truce is alright. No point in causing another war just yet..._

* * *

><p>AN: Slowpoke09 message me and cleared up Toothless's weight. Apparently it's published in a book or something (even though I literally SCoured the internet and came up empty). His weight is roughly 1,700 pounds!**_

**Thanks, Slowpoke09! :D**

8. Gothi

**Chapter Eight**

**A/N: In response to...**

_InfinitiumAce: __**Lol, I wrote that chapter because lately I've been getting tons of PMs and reviews asking for some Hiccstrid so I figured I must be starving you guys or something... XD Otherwise, I would have simply moved on with the plot. And no, actually Alvin isn't going to be the bad guy in this fanfic. I've actually been trying my darndest to keep him in-character and say he'll 'be good' until all this blows over. And absolutely not! I LOVE long reviews, they're the best kind in my book! :D**_

_NightFury999: __**Haha, I wouldn't worry too much about Alvin. It's the invading army on Berk that we'll need to think about pretty soon... And sorry XD You'll hopefully get your answers in the coming chapters.**_

_Breyannia: __**Your enthusiasm for this amuses me greatly! XD And

the High King would actually be the Roman Emporer (since that's the time-frame we're working with) so...whatever he looks like at this point in time XD**_

_OinkyThePiggy: __**Yep, but I doubt Astrid is worried about kissing Hiccup in front of people at this point XD She was practically ripping her hair out with worry not less than ten minutes ago. She's likely just relieved to have him back. **_

_PT: __**Lol, thank you! :D I try to be surprising and have plot twists and whatnot and I'm glad you appreciate my efforts. XD**_

_rachlie: __**Yay! :D I'm glad you like it! And yes, Hiccstrid and Fatherly!Stoick are two of my favorite things in fanfictions...so I tend to write that a lot.**_

* * *

><p>"Ouch!" Hiccup flinches as Gothi's bony hands draw the bandages a little too tight around his shoulder. The elderly medicine woman offers an apologetic smirk and loosens the gauze a bit, motioning for Gobber to hand her a rag so she can clean some of the blood from the boy's skin.<p>

The Blacksmith obeys and then hobbles over to sit down across from his apprentice, a huge grin on his weathered face. "I'm glad you're feeling a little better, lad." He says. "It's good to have you back. You and your father both."

Hiccup smiles through the pain and jerkily nods his head. "Yeah...I'll bet it's a relief not to have to be in charge anymore, huh Gobber?" He jokes, wincing and grabbing the edge of the table when Gothi applies some kind of medicine to his wound, making his shoulder scream in protest.

And his mentor chuckles quietly. "That it is. Your father is better cut out for it than I am." He agrees.

Hiccup's expression suddenly dims and lowers his gaze, eyes filling with thought. "I know how that feels..." He grumbles as he stiffly rolls his good shoulder to work some of the stiffness out of it. Sleeping on a boat for several hours will do that...

Gobber frowns, sensing Hiccup's distress, and opens his mouth to say something but is interrupted when the drape over the mouth of the makeshift hut is pushed aside and Astrid steps inside, Toothless close behind her.

The dragon's ears perk up at the sight of his Rider but his steps are slow and heavy as he trudges over to meet him. His limp seems more and more defined as time goes on...and Hiccup finds himself frowning in concern. Toothless's leg is getting worse, not better.

"Thanks for feeding him, Astrid." He mumbles as he tries to lean down to stroke Toothless's head. But his attempt is thwarted when Gothi scoldingly smacks his wrist, silently telling him to sit up straight so she can finish his bandages.

"It's no problem." The girl replies, sinking onto the stool beside

Gobber's. She seems more relaxed than she has in days, now that Hiccup is here. "Although he didn't eat much... Is he feeling okay?" She asks, her brow knotting as she watches her friend's Night Fury curl up and lay down on the ground beside him.

"I don't know..." Hiccup admits, worry evident in his voice. "Gobber, could you check his leg for me? I'm worried it might get infected..."

"Sure thing, Hiccup." Gobber says as he kneels down beside Toothless and gently pulls back the wrap over his wounded thigh, inciting a small whimper from the dragon. "Ahh, yep. It's not infected yet but it's certainly irritated. Gothi," He says looking up. "Once you're done with Hiccup, would you mind mixing up something for Toothless?"

The elder nods her head as she finishes tying up Hiccup's shoulder, patting his back to tell him he can get up now.

"Thanks, Gothi." He says as he stands, absently cradling his right arm with his left. Then, he kneels beside his dragon and reassuringly scratches Toothless's chin. "Don't worry, buddy. Gothi'll fix your leg and you'll be good as new."

Toothless purrs and leans his head into Hiccup's hand, seeming to appreciate his comforting words. Although he tenses up as soon as Gothi gets near his wound and Hiccup has to remind him she's only trying to help... The old woman unwraps his painfully inflamed thigh and gets to work on easing as much pain as she can for him. Soon, Toothless relaxes again and closes his eyes to rest.

Hiccup shifts his weight so he's settled more comfortably on the floor, his hand resting on his friend's back to remind him he's here. And eventually, he too lets his eyes fall shut and leans his head against the wall. However, before he can recline too much, he feels a subtle nudge against his hip and looks up.

Astrid smiles softly at him when she says, "You go get some rest, Hiccup. I'll stay here with Toothless and make sure he's okay." She extends her hand to help him up but he doesn't take it.

"Thanks, Astrid...but I'd rather stay here for now." He mutters, nodding his head in his dragon's direction. He doesn't doubt that Astrid would be able to keep an eye on him...it's just that he's worried about Toothless and it feels like they've been apart a lot ever since he woke up. For now, he'd much rather stay by his friend's side and help him if he needs it.

And when he glances back up at Astrid, he finds her watching the two of them with a knowing look on her face. "Alright." She sighs with a small shrug. "If you say so." Then, the Viking girl strolls toward the hut's flap, pausing only long enough to say, "I'm gonna go check on Stormfly. Be back in a little while." before she leaves.

With that, Hiccup sits back again and returns his attention to Toothless, who is trying with all his might to ignore the pain in his leg as Gothi works on him. "It's okay, bud." Hiccup whispers as he continues to stroke his dragon's back. "I'm not going anywhere. I'll stay right here with you."

A whimpering sound is his only response and it tugs at Hiccup's heart in a way that makes his breath momentarily falter.

"Gothi, isn't there anything you can do to...numb the pain or anything _first_?" He practically pleads. "Seems like it hurts a lot..."

She only shakes her head and relentlessly goes on working, Hiccup watching her with a conflicted expression. However, he's pulled from his anxieties by a slobbery lick across the back of his hand.

Toothless drones and nudges his Rider's hip with his nose, purring gently. His way of saying 'I'm fine, don't worry.' The Night Fury warbles slightly in his throat when Hiccup smirks at him and affectionately rubs his neck.

"I know." He mumbles. "I guess we're both just a little over protective, huh?"

* * *

><p>At that moment, unbeknownst to Hiccup or any of the other Hooligans, a small sail boat large enough for only one occupant is slowly drifting toward Outcast Island. Its inhabitant's dark eyes seem to glimmer with amusement as he draws nearer and nearer to the jagged mass of cliffs and mountains.<p>

Glancing down at his now shredded clothing and bleeding wounds, he sighs wearily. Just more scars to add to his ever-growing collection. However... With a little frown, his gaze drifts to the satchel at his feet.

_Sorry Stoick, _Aelius thinks. _Seems I've 'failed' your little mission..._ With that, he chuckles to himself and leans back in the boat, allowing the breeze to carry his vessel to its destination. He's in no hurry, after all. Might as well delay the inevitable for as long as possible...

9. Failed Mission

**Chapter Nine**

**A/N: Sorry the story has been kind of slow. It'll pick up here pretty soon! Also... WRITER'S BLOCK WHY?!**

**In response to...**

_InfinitiumAce: __**Ugh, exams are the worst. I've had a lot of them lately... Yeah, Aelius's business will be revealed pretty soon.**_

_NightFury999: __**Sorry! XD**_

_Breyannia: __**No, I don't think I'll be showing the High King (mostly because he's not a direct character in the story.)**_

_Jesusfreak: __**Don't worry, there'll be action soon! And I'm glad

you like it :D**_

OinkyThePiggy: **Yep, there are issues on the horizon, that's for sure.**

* * *

><p>By the time Astrid returns to Gothi's makeshift hut, it's nearly midnight but there is still the faint glow of lanterns spilling out from within. The Viking girl shakes her head and brushes the drape aside, entering the hut to find the elderly woman just finishing up with Toothless's wound. Said dragon coos at the sight of her and his tail slowly sweeps back and forth across the floor.<p>

"Hey, boy." She whispers with a smile. "Feeling better?"

Toothless purrs and nuzzles his snout against her hand when she bends down to pet him. Even though it was only a matter of cleaning and re-wrapping his wound, he seems to feel a lot better. Maybe Gothi administered something for the pain as well.

"Well I'm glad to hear that." She chuckles as she glances sideways at Hiccup. The dragon's Rider has fallen asleep against the wall of the hut, his hand still resting on Toothless's back. "Gothi," She says, looking up now. "If you're finished, I'll take these guys off your hands."

And Gothi quietly nods her head and sits down on a stool, jabbing the bottom of her staff into Gobber's good foot, instantly waking the snoozing Blacksmith.

"Huh-wha...? W'as going on?!" He demands in a groggy slur.

"I think that's Gothi's way of telling you to go to your own tent so she can sleep." Astrid clarifies, earning another nod of agreeance from the elder. "I was just about to take Hiccup and Toothless to camp as well."

Gobber grumbles something under his breath before climbing to his feet and hobbling over to the exit. "I had some of the others pitch a tent for Hiccup and Stoick earlier." He tells her. "Near the shore."

"I saw." Astrid confirms as she leans over to shake Hiccup awake. "Thanks."

With that, Gobber stumbles out into the sand in the direction of his own tent and Astrid rouses her friend from his nap. Hiccup blinks sleepily up at her and asks what's going on, his half-lidded eyes drifting over to Toothless, who affectionately licks the back of his hand.

"Come on," She says as she helps him to his feet. "I'll take you to your tent so you can sleep."

He groggily agrees and stumbles out behind her, motioning for Toothless to follow. But before they can get too far-

"Hang on you two." Stoick calls as he hurriedly crosses the distance between them. The teens stop and wait for their Chief, figuring he

must have been on his way to see how his son is doing.

Hiccup yawns tiredly but still finds himself smiling. "Hey, Dad." He greets. "What are you still doing up?"

"I just wanted to see how our wounded warriors are fairing." He chuckles, squeezing Hiccup's good shoulder. "How are you and Toothless feeling?"

The boy shrugs, unable to contain yet another yawn. "I'm fine. Toothless's leg is still pretty sore but Gothi made sure it won't get infected."

"Good, I'm glad to hear it." Stoick says. "Thank you for taking care of them, Astrid."

"It's not a problem, Chief." She replies politely. "I was just taking them to your tent." Astrid explains, expecting him to simply accept this as he usually would. However, she's surprised when suddenly frowns, his facial expression turning a bit...distressed. "Sir?" She asks, concerned.

"Dad?" Hiccup wonders.

"Astrid, would you mind if I speak with my son alone?" He says, his hand still placed firmly on Hiccup's shoulder.

"Um, no. Of course not." She mutters, confusion written on her face. "I'll see you tomorrow, Hiccup." She says as she turns and hurries off toward camp, sensing that whatever it is Stoick wants to tell Hiccup, it must be important.

Once she's gone, Hiccup turns back to his father and frowns. "What's wrong, Dad?" He asks. "Did something happen?"

But his father's expression is now a strict one. Whatever this is about, it must be serious. "Hiccup," He begins slowly. "We need to talk about that assassin..." He immediately feels his son flinch beneath his grip, the boy's face turning guilty. "You're not in trouble, Hiccup." He clarifies. "There's just something I need to tell you."

The young Rider looks up at his dad, wondering what it could be.

"I just wanted to tell you that I know it must have been hard to do what you did." He says. "You've never been the type to pick a fight, after all..."

"Dad, I-"

"Let me finish, Hiccup."

His son obediently goes quiet, although his eyes are full of thought as he stands there, clearly wondering what the punch-line is going to be...

"And while I don't exactly approve of you consorting with someone that dangerous, you...did the right thing, Hiccup." Stoick concludes, smiling at his wide-eyed son.

"You...do?" Hiccup gasps in bewilderment, suddenly recalling how Aelius had been at their hideout on Berk when he woke up. "But...it's only because the assassin killed Ymir that we're all here right now! If I'd handled it differently we wouldn't be-"

"If you'd handled it differently, there's no guarantee we'd all even be alive right now." Stoick cuts in. "I know it was hard for you but...keep in mind, leaders and Chiefs have to make hard decisions. Sometimes it's impossible to know what the right choice is but...because of you, everyone is alive and safe." He hesitates before adding, "_I'm_ alive because of that."

Hiccup swallows and lowers his gaze. He's never felt such a strange combination of pride and guilt all at the same time. Proud that his father thinks he did well in saving their people...but guilty because he cost Ymir his life. And that's not something he can ever give back, no matter how hard he wants to.

Stoick smiles again and pats Hiccup's back. "The tribe was looking up to you, Hiccup. They believed you could save them and you did. You did well, son." He assures him.

"Thanks, Dad..." Hiccup mutters dully, his emotions now acting somewhat like a doubled edged sword, piercing his heart from both sides as he stands there, wobbling on weak legs in the sand.

His father responds with another comforting squeeze to his shoulder before releasing the boy and stepping back. "Now, why don't you head off to bed and get some rest. Looks like you need it."

"Aren't you coming?" Hiccup asks him, even though he doesn't really care either way. His mind is too busy for sleep now, he can already tell.

"No, not yet." Stoick sighs as he plants his hands on his hips. "Speaking of Aelius, he should be here soon. We have a lot to talk about since he helped us so much."

"He's coming here?" Hiccup asks suspiciously. "Do you really think that's a good idea?"

Stoick frowns slightly and folds his arms. "Aelius is a dangerous man, Hiccup. But he's also very greedy. His loyalties will always lay with whoever pays him. I struck a deal with him before we left Berk and he should be arriving at any moment to collect his pay."

"What kind of deal...?" His son grumbles, inciting a small sigh from his father.

"Nothing crazy, I assure you of that." Stoick tells him. "But it's too complicated to explain right now. I'll tell you about it in the morning."

"Why not right no-" Hiccup starts to ask, only to be silenced by a warning look from his dad.

"Because right now, it's late. You and Toothless need as much rest as you can get right now." Stoick points a finger in the direction of the only unoccupied tent in the camp. "We'll talk tomorrow, I promise."

Hiccup sighs in irritation but doesn't push this any further. For now. At the moment, his brain is already jammed up with millions of troubled thoughts and he can tell he won't be able to sleep with just this much on his mind...let alone adding more to his conscience. So it's with an annoyed groan that he says goodnight to his father and tells Toothless to follow him while he trudges off to bed, where he'll surely lay awake for hours without any sleep.

_What a day... _He grumbles to himself as he shoves the tent flap aside and crawls onto the cot that's already been laid out for him. Closing his eyes, he blindly fumbles with his hand for Toothless, who he gently pets as he tries to fall asleep. "Night, bud. Hopefully you get some rest, at least."

And his dragon purrs but doesn't shut his eyes, instead perking his ears as he listens to the commotion going on outside as a small sail boat is tugged onto shore and a pair of heavy feet stagger into the sand. When the newcomer speaks, Toothless recognizes his voice as the assassin from Berk.

"Looks like we underestimated them, Stoick." Aelius croaks as he climbs out of his boat, clutching his bloodied arm to his chest. "They caught me before I got my chance to plant the letter."

Stoick swears in frustration but doesn't say too much else, instead telling the assassin to come to the fire so they can talk and come up with a new plan of action...

Toothless's eavesdropping is interrupted when his Rider suddenly sits up and tilts his head, a look of concentration on his face. He must have heard Aelius and his father talking as well.

"What do you think that means?" Hiccup whispers mostly to himself. "He failed to 'plant the letter'? What letter?" With a frown, he ponders finding his dad and demanding to know what's going on but decides against it when he remembers how quickly Stoick had shut him out earlier. _He said he'd tell me in the morning but...I feel like by then, it might already be too late._

* * *

><p>AN: Yup, writer's block sucks. I've been struggling with it for the past few chapters but now it's gotten pretty bad. Ugh. It took me all afternoon to write ONE chapter because of this. -- Meh. Whatever. **_

**I hope it didn't sound too bad or awkward or anything...if so, I apologize.**

10. The Letter

**Chapter Ten**

**A/N: Sorry about no post yesterday (yeah, I hate me too.) I was visiting the vocational school I'm transferring to for my last year of high school from 6pm to 9pm. Before and after those hours I was working on my homework and feverishly trying to finish the critical essay for my Adv. English class...**

__**In response to...**__

_InfinitiiumAce: __**Yep :) The letter is important and the reason for the title and the 'blood' part will become... symbolically clear... pretty soon. XD Good luck on your exam! *fingers crossed* And yeah, I know it's technically my call when to post my chapters...but I like updating everyday because otherwise, I'd just get pulled into procrastination and other assorted shenanigans. **__

_NightFury999: __**Lol, well my chapters are pretty short so that figures into one reason it doesn't take me a long time to write. And the other thing is, when I write, I shut down. XD I just listen to music and write for hours on end, not doing anything else. That's probably why it doesn't take me forever to get a chapter out. And thanks, I'm glad you enjoyed it :D**__

_OinkyThePiggy: __**Oh good, I'm glad it didn't sound odd to you. (Even though now that it's the next day and I'm rereading it, I keep finding things I could have written out better...oh well.) Thank you :)**__

_Breyannia: __**Yup, his deal will be explained very soon. And I don't know about tomorrow...but I will say that in the near future, they're going to need to just push through the pain... *evil grin***__

_Guest: __**Thank you and I'm glad you're enjoying it so far! :D I do intend to keep the chapters going on a regular basis again, yesterday (Friday) was just a freak thing, as explained in the author's note.**__

__**Thanks for the reviews everyone! I know I say this a lot but I mean it: I really do appreciate everyone who takes the time to give me some feedback :) Thanks to everyone else as well, for all those lovely follows and favorites! I love you guys! :D**__

* * *

><p>While Toothless focuses on hearing what Stoick and Aelius are saying by the fire, Hiccup slinks out of his bed and over to the flap of the large tent. He carefully brushes it aside and peers out into the dark, his eyes immediately finding his father and the assassin standing across from each other and talking feverishly about something. By the amount of blood on his dark tunic and the way his left arm dangles uselessly by his side, Aelius appears to be injured. There's a satchel sitting on the ground by his feet, also stained with red. It bears a crest Hiccup has never seen before...<p>

_What is going on? _He wonders with a frown. _Dad looks pretty upset._

And that Stoick does. Berk's Chief towers over Aelius, his green eyes flaming not with anger but with determination. Whatever they're saying, it must be important... But as hard as he strains, Hiccup simply can't hear them from this distance. Without closing the flap of their tent, he turns back to Toothless, who's ears are twitching and his head tilting as he listens.

The dragon notices that his friend is staring at him and shifts his

attention to the boy, cooing curiously as if to say 'what?'

Hiccup sighs and shakes his head. "If only I had your hearing." He grumbles as he returns to the opening, eyes narrowing as he struggles to determine what might be going on between those two. _Hmph, pretty hypocritical of Dad to say he doesn't want me consorting with Aelius but then he turns around and does the same thing... Figures._

While Hiccup watches from a distance, Stoick and Aelius appear to finish their conversation when the assassin wavers dangerously on his feet and doubles over, clutching his ribcage in a pained fashion. Stoick seems to sigh and places a hand on the other man's back, ushering him toward an unoccupied tent Hiccup hadn't noticed anyone pitch.

Aelius nods and straightens up again, but not before grabbing his satchel and slinging it over his shoulder. He ducks into the tent and Stoick waits outside, his arms folded.

A few minutes later, the assassin reappears. His shirt has been changed, from the dark and bloodied tunic to a loose-fitting, white one. When he and Stoick start pacing away from the camp and somewhere far enough away that they can negotiate in private, Hiccup realizes...Aelius left his bag behind within his tent.

Biting the inside of his cheek, he wonders about the possibility that there might be something inside of it that could tell him what's going on. _By the way he and Dad were talking, it seems like they don't want anyone to know he's here...which means he'll probably be gone by morning. _With a nervous frown, he glances back at Toothless.

The dragon coos questioningly at him and stands up, only to wince at the pain in his leg and lay back down. He offers an apologetic whimper to his Rider but Hiccup only smiles and strokes his head.

"Don't worry, bud. I'll be back in a few seconds..." He sneaks out of the flap and takes a steadying breath to calm himself. "...just want to know what my dad is planning." Then, without wasting another moment, sprints across the distance between the two tents and dives inside the assassin's, skidding to a clumsy halt just inside the opening.

It's clear to him that this tent was pitched in a hurry. There's nothing inside, not even a cot, save for Aelius's dirty tunic and satchel. Hiccup glances over his shoulder nervously, making sure no one has seen him, before kneeling down and shamelessly lifting open the assassin's bag.

Right on the top and sealed with the same crest he found on the satchel, is a letter. Hiccup reaches out to grab it but hesitates, his fingers curling back in as if reluctant to help him read the note... Does he really want to know what kind of deal his father would make with an assassin? Stoick _did _say he'd tell him in the morning...is this all necessary?

But before his doubts can sink too deeply, the boy shakes himself and grabs the letter, intent on figuring out what his father would hide from him. And their whole tribe.

His fingers trembling slightly from anxiousness and fear as he tries to peel the seal off without ruining it. However, as soon as he tries, the wax stamp peels up and the page unfurls... The seal was fresh, he realizes. It hadn't sat long enough to even harden.

With a confused frown, Hiccup looks at the crest on the front of the letter. If he hasn't seen it before, it must be a far away place. Far enough that a seal would be able to harden... Unless...unless it didn't actually come from that place.

Finally turning over the letter, Hiccup's focused green eyes skim the page...but he growls in frustration when he determines it's not written in Norse. Whatever this language is, it must belong to the invading army. He can't read it. He sighs angrily and presses the seal back over the page, making it stick once again. In one last-ditch effort, he sifts through the other assorted items in Aelius's satchel and is about to give up...when he notices something else.

There, balled up in the corner of the bag, is another piece of paper. Hiccup grabs it and smooths it out, his heart giving a little leap of excitement when he notices it's written in his father's handwriting...and looks to be the same format as the sealed letter!

But the boy nearly jumps out of his skin at the sound of distant voices. Aelius and his dad must be coming back! With no time to waste, he shoves the unread note into his vest and ducks out of the tent, thanking Thor when he figures out he hasn't been seen yet.

He ducks back into his own tent and immediately throws himself onto his cot, silently praying his father won't come straight here. The stolen paper suddenly feels very heavy laying against his chest and his hands are shaking. He closes his eyes and pretends to be asleep, just in case.

Toothless watches his human's peculiar behavior with a look of confusion and concern. He stands up, flinching in pain, but pushes through it so he can limp over to Hiccup and nudge the boy's arm as if to ask, 'Are you okay?'

Hiccup cracks open one eye and shakes his head at Toothless. "Quiet, bud." He whispers. "I'll tell you in a second..." So the Night Fury obeys, curling up beside Hiccup's bed and following his lead, pretending to be asleep.

In the tense silence that follows, Hiccup listens to the growing sound of the incomprehensible voices of his father and the assassin. His mind hyper-aware of the letter in his vest. He squeezes his eyes shut and tries to decipher the small amount of text he'd been able to read before he'd been forced to run away.

From the High King of The Holy Roman Empire...

Except it had been written in Stoick's handwriting. So what does that mean?!

* * *

><p>AN: Yeah...kind of a short chapter. Sorry.
T_T**_

11. Resolve

**Chapter Eleven**

**A/N: Climax-y moments are coming pretty soon, guys. Maybe this chapter or the next...**

**In response to...**

_InfinitiumAce: __**Thanks for understanding about the missing update :) And yeah, that is one reason I try to update frequently because I know other people aren't able to. Someone has to fill in the gaps or the fandom might get bored. XD**_

_Breyannia: __**You'll find out in this chapter, actually. :) And as for Berk's condition...well, you'll just have to wait and see.**_

NightFury999: **Lol XD **

* * *

><p>When Stoick finally returns to his tent, he finds Hiccup asleep on his cot. The boy's face is tense though, as if he might be having a nightmare, and his breaths are a little too rapid for his father's liking. With a weary frown, Stoick reaches out to gently brush the hair from his son's eyes. He hopes the boy isn't in too much pain...because leave it to Hiccup to hide it from everyone.<p>

Nervously, he remembers back on Berk, not twenty-four hours ago, Hiccup had fallen asleep and wouldn't wake up. For a long moment, Stoick ponders waking him, just to be sure, and after a while he decides that might be best. So he cautiously shakes Hiccup's good shoulder and says, "Wake up, Hiccup."

Almost instantly, the teen's eyes open. They don't look glazed or sleepy in the least bit but Stoick doesn't seem to notice. "Dad?" Hiccup asks innocently, trying to ignore the weight of the note in his vest. "What's up?"

But his father only draws back from him and smiles a bit. "Nothing." He assures him. "It just looked like you were having a nightmare."

"Oh..." Hiccup awkwardly shifts his weight. He hadn't even been asleep so he couldn't have been having a bad dream. He's just really bad at pretending to be asleep... "Thanks."

His father nods and then sits down on the edge of his own bed. But before he can lay down-

"Dad."

Stoick glances over at his, who is now staring at the floor with a worried expression on his face. "Yes?"

"I, uh..." Hiccup sighs, his shoulders deflating and he shakes his head. "Nevermind... goodnight."

"Goodnight, Hiccup." Stoick says, watching his son lay back down and roll over to face the wall of the tent. _Something's bothering him... _He decides. _Could he have heard me talking with Aelius? _But instead of urging the conversation on, Stoick lays down as well. _We'll talk in the morning like I said. I'm going to need as much energy as possible if I'm going to explain all of this to him..._

* * *

><p>The next morning rolls around sooner than Hiccup would have liked. Although he's dying to know about this mysterious deal between his father and the assassin, he's also quite nervous. Which is why he never finished reading that letter... Instead, he wakes early and watches out the tent flap until Aelius wanders out toward the woods, probably to relieve himself.<p>

Then, Hiccup sprints across that familiar distance and shoves the crumpled note back into the satchel and immediately leaves once again, quietly resolving to believe his father's explanation. His dad's words will probably make more sense anyway and won't cause anyone to jump to conclusions or something...

He's just set foot within the tent when he sees his father stirring, about to wake up. Hiccup gulps, hoping he hasn't made a big mistake somewhere along the line... "M-morning, Dad." He greets as calmly as he can muster.

And Stoick sits up, rubbing his eyes. "Ah, morning Hiccup." He replies, gazing at the boy with a suspicious look on his face. "What're you doing up so early? Usually it takes Toothless jumping on the roof to get you up..."

"Uhh..." The Rider glances down at his dragon, still asleep beside his bed. "I just...uh, figured I'd get up early and...walk around a little..." He lies badly. "You know...get my strength back... Um, besides, I didn't really want Toothless trying to jump on the roof of the tent..." He forces a laugh, trying to distinguish if his dad believes him or not. "That would uh...end badly...I think." By the time he's done giving his stammering explanation, his hands are ringing together so nervously he's sure his father must notice.

"Okaay..." Stoick grumbles, standing up. "Are you sure nothing else is going on?" He asks, drawing a bit closer.

"Uhhh...nope! N-not that I can think of...ha...ha..." But his weak grin feels fake, even to himself. And by the way Stoick's mouth opens as if to say something, Hiccup is sure he knows as well. But before the Chief can retaliate to his son's blatant lies and nervous behavior, a voice calls in from outside.

"Knock, knock!" It's Astrid.

As Stoick turns away momentarily to open the flap and allow her in, Hiccup visibly deflates, releasing the breath he hadn't noticed he was holding. _Thank Thor for Astrid... _He lowers his hands and tries

to find a natural way of holding them so she won't catch onto the tension between the father and son...but Astrid always has been observant.

"What's going on?" The blonde Viking asks before saying anything else. Her innocent expression, however, is marred by the burning curiosity in her eyes.

"Nothing!" Both Hiccup and Stoick say in unison.

"Um, we were just...saying our good mornings..." Stoick continues, flashing his son a warning look as if to say 'we'll finish this later'. "What did you need, Astrid?"

She tilts her head, obviously wondering why they're lying to her, but clearly lets it roll off her back for now. "Nothing really," She shrugs. "I just heard you guys talking and figured I'd stop by and see how the wounded warriors are doing." She smiles and motions to Hiccup and Toothless, who is just now waking up due to all the ruckus.

"We're fine." Hiccup assures her, more sincerely this time. And it's not totally a lie either. Whether it's just from being distracted by all the chaos of the past hours or he's actually improving, he can't tell. But what he does know, is he hasn't really felt his shoulder pain since yesterday. That's got to be good, right?

"Well I'm glad to hear that." She says with a nod. Then, jabbing a thumb in the direction of the main camp, she adds, "A few others are waking up now and mentioned they were going to make some breakfast. You two want to join?"

Hiccup feels a pang of relief at the chance to escape this tension and starts to say, "Sure, we'd love t-" But is cut off.

"In a moment, Astrid. There's something I need to talk to Hiccup about." Stoick tells her, obviously hinting the 'alone' part.

For a few seconds, she lingers. Staring back and forth between the two of them while her mind tries to decipher what may have happened between her friend and his father. But then she sighs and turns around in defeat, figuring she can ask Hiccup later. _I can't believe this. Second time in less than a day they've kicked out._. She grumbles to herself as she stalks away in irritation.

As soon as she's gone, Hiccup lowers his head again and his hands go back to their nervous ringing. "Dad-" He begins but, once again, is interrupted before he can continue.

"I think I owe you an explanation this morning." He recalls with a sigh and Hiccup straightens, surprised at the unexpected turn in their conversation. "Well, if you still want to know..." He motions for his son to have a seat and the boy obeys. "The deal I made with that assassin was...fragile. It would be the second time we've asked him to betray his own people."

"Wait! Aelius is from the same place as the invaders?!" Hiccup gasps.

"Yes, he's from Rome. And was originally sent here to assassinate me,

remember? He worked for Ymir first."

Hiccup nods, his mind already reeling. How had he missed something so obvious? Now, he leans forward and prepares himself for what else is surely to come of his dad's explanation.

"I gave him a letter to copy into their language so he could deliver it."

"What did it say?" Hiccup asks.

Stoick frowns and shakes his head. "That it was orders from their High King to return to Rome. That, without Ymir, there was no reason to stay."

_Clever. _Hiccup remarks. "Why didn't it work?"

"Aelius was discovered. They never even saw the letter..." He sighs and plants his hands on his hips, seeming downtrodden.

Hiccup perks up as a thought occurs to him. "We could try again!"

"No, they'd recognize Aelius immediately..."

"Not with him!" Hiccup protests. "Send me! Toothless and I are the stealthiest on the island! We could get in and get out before anyone even knew we were there!"

His father stands there, stunned for a moment. But then, his expression darkens and he shakes his head. "Out of the question!" He barks. "You and Toothless are still recovering!"

"Dad, we're fine!" Hiccup tells him. "It wouldn't take long at all to just-"

"No." Stoick interrupts him as he barges toward the opening of the tent. "I'm not going to risk your life again. Forget it. I'll figure something else out!" With that, he stalks toward the bonfire that has been lit in the center of camp, his people cooking food in its flames.

But Hiccup remains where he is, a hand absently touching his wounded shoulder. _I can still do this with a hurt arm...and Toothless's leg won't hinder his flight at all. It would be so easy to send us...
_With an angry snort, Hiccup flops back down onto his bed. _I'll convince him eventually. I just need to wait for the right moment..._

12. The Plan

**Chapter Twelve**

_**A/N: Um...I got a little silly in this chapter. Sorry.
o_o**_

**In response to...**

_InfinitiumAce: __**Lol, you also have to remember that Hiccup has

been a little distracted lately...what with the injured arm, injured dragon, Berk being overrun, suspicious dad etc.. XD And don't worry, the "Blood" part will arrive soon. Don't worry, though. I'm pretty sure Astrid isn't just going to let him fly off without her... XD**_

_Jo: __**Lol! You'll find out how this turns out for our reckless hero... XD**_

_Jesusfreak: __**Yeah, I feel like that fits his character. I don't think Hiccup would be a bad liar judging by how much he stammers when he's nervous and how fidgety he gets. **_

_OinkyThePiggy: __**The intuition is strong in this one... XD**_

* * *

><p>"Are ya' sure that's a good plan, Stoick?" Alvin grumbles as he stares out across the Hooligan camp that has settled on the beach of his island. "Ya' said it yerself...could be dangerous for a bunch o' kids."<p>

"I know, Alvin." Stoick assures him. "But my son was right about one thing. If _Aelius_ is unable to sneak in, then we'll need a dragon. And since Hiccup and Toothless are too badly injured to go out there, I'm sending the others. Hopefully, they can manage it together."

"And if they can't?" The Outcast presses as he folds his arms over his bulky chest. His eyes narrow when Stoick doesn't respond immediately.

"Then there's nothing we _can _do."

* * *

><p>Back in camp, Hiccup and Astrid are sitting among the other Riders. The teens chat mindlessly for the most part, their dragons lingering nearby either chirping at each other or, in Toothless's case, playfully stalking a ladybug who has taken up residence on a nearby rock.<p>

"So _that's _why the Chief didn't send us out before!" Fishlegs exclaims. "He thought the assassin would be able to handle everything!"

"That's right." Hiccup confirms. "But now that Aelius is unable to do anymore, it'll be up to us...whether my father decides to ask for our help or not."

"I thought you said you wanted to talk to him again." Astrid points out, her voice holding more than just a slight edge of suspicion.

"I will talk to him." He assures her. "But if he says no...we'll probably go anyway."

She scowls at him. "We?"

"Yes, we." Hiccup sighs as he stands up, trying to keep his right arm as straight as possible so it doesn't look like he's favoring too

much. "Look, I'm fine!" He tells them. "And a hurt leg won't stop Toothless from flying! It'll be easy!"

"Then we should be fine alone." Astrid counters quickly as she, too, stands. "Hiccup, I think we'd all feel better if you and Toothless stayed behind."

"Astrid, I'm not-"

"Alright, alright!" Snotlout interrupts them as he jumps to his feet, motioning with his hands for them to calm down. "Astrid, who're we trying to kid here? We all know Hiccup is going to go one way or another."

She only glares at him, silently wondering when Snotlout started taking Hiccup's side... "Snotlout-" She begins threateningly, only to be halted again.

"He's already talking about going behind Stoick's back...might as well keep him where we can make sure he's not going behind ours too."

For a moment, Astrid just stares at him, stunned. "Great." She grumbles. "You pick now to start talking smartly." But she doesn't continue her argument against Hiccup. As much as she hates to admit it, Snotlout's right. "Fine!" She groans in defeat. "Just remember this, Hiccup Horrendous Haddock The Third! If your father finds out about this-"

"Finds out about what?"

The Riders suck in a collective gasp and spin around, finding their Chief standing right behind them. "Oh! Chief! We...didn't know you were there..." Fishlegs stammers.

"Of course we didn't." Ruffnut rolls her eyes. "Otherwise, we wouldn't have been talking about-" But she gets cut off when Hiccup suddenly clamps his hand over her mouth and flashes his dad a nervous smile.

"Hey, Dad!" He practically shouts, hoping to drown out anyone else's attempts to give them away. "Whaaat are you doing here?" But he yelps in disgust when Ruffnut retaliates his interruption by licking the palm of his hand, which is still clamped over her mouth. "UGH! RUFFNUT!" He barks, grimacing and shaking the slobber off his palm. "That's disgusting!"

"Ech, your hand tastes like dragon!" She gags, wiping her tongue on her vest. "And believe me! I know what dragon tastes like!"

"It's true!" Tuffnut jumps in enthusiastically. "I dared her to lick Barf once! She almost threw up! It was awesome!"

Despite Tuffnut's excitement, everyone else is staring at the twins with looks of disbelief and annoyance. "Okay... That's gross." Hiccup sighs. "Getting off of that subject, what did you need Dad?" He asks as he turns away and tries to figure out a way to get Ruffnut's saliva off of his hand as quickly as possible.

Stoick pinches the bridge of his nose and shakes his head. "I was

just going to tell you kids that I've made a decision regarding what you spoke to me about this morning, Hiccup." He explains wearily.

Immediately his son perks up. "Really? What?"

His father lowers his hand again and turns serious once more. "I've decided to allow your Riders to give it a shot. They're our best chance at sneaking onto Berk without being spotted."

The reaction he receives is an excited rumble that instantly moves through the ground of teens as they glance in relief at one another. At least they have permission to go now.

"Thank you, Dad." Hiccup smiles as calmly as he can, hoping his father won't notice when he adds, "We'll do our best." And then he turns and starts to walk away, eyes squeezing shut as he silently prays that he won't-

"Hold on one second, young man!" Stoick's rough hand catches him by the good shoulder and turns him back around. "I said your Riders can go. You're still grounded."

With an irritated moan, Hiccup tugs out of his father's grip. "Oh come on, Dad! Have you seen their dragons?! They'll stand out too much! They'll get caught!"

"Hiccup-"

"Remind me! Whose is the dragon who was never even seen before I shot him down?! Whose has the best camouflage at night? Not the pastel colored Nadder or the bright red Monstrous Nightmare!"

"Hiccup-"

"And you'll need speed to get there! Toothless is the fastest and we can-"

"HICCUP!" Stoick shouts furiously, causing the boy to halt his words and stare in surprise. "I've said it before but I'll say it again..." He begins, his voice now lowered to avoid the attention of the other Vikings who are wandering around the camp. "...because I know you're incapable of listening to the simplest of orders. You are NOT to leave this island! Understand?"

Hiccup's expression darkens into a scowl and he folds his arms, his eyes locking with his father's in a silent challenge of the command. But Stoick isn't in the mood for his defiant teenage son's rebelliousness right now. He has a tribe to look after and he turns to walk away, only stopping long enough to tell the other Riders to meet him at sundown so he can give them their orders. And then he continues leaving without another word to his fuming son.

For what feels like a long time, even after Stoick has disappeared from sight, no one moves or speaks. Even the dragons have frozen in place and are staring at Hiccup, whose fists are clenched so tightly they're actually shaking.

Finally, it's Astrid who decides to break the silence, despite her

previous frustration with her friend. She slowly approaches him and places a gentle hand on his shoulder. "Hiccup, I know you're angry but-"

Suddenly, he release a huge sigh and his shoulder deflate, his head bowing in defeat. "I know, I know..." He mumbles. "You think he's right. You think I should stay behind too."

She lets go of his arm and takes a step back, her lips drawing into a straight line. "Actually..."

He glances over his shoulder at her, his brow knotted in confusion.

"You're right." She admits. "None of our dragons would be stealthy or quick enough to get in and back out without being spotted. Your father is only fooling himself to think so because he doesn't want to endanger you...but if you're sure that your injuries won't slow the two of you down then...what's there to be worried about?"

The whole time she's talking, a little smile gradually grows over Hiccup's face. He straightens up and adds, "Besides, I'll have you guys there to watch my back."

She nods, a sneaky look in her blue eyes. "Exactly. Now the only problem is making sure your father doesn't find out."

Hiccup returns her grin. "I think that can be arranged... Give me a few minutes." And then he turns and runs off to find his dad, an idea already brewing in his shrewd little mind.

* * *

><p>AN: Okay...I might have lied when I said the climax might start here. XD This turned out to be build-up for the climax, which will begin next chapter. This time I'm positive! I hope...
o_o**_

13. To Berk

**Chapter Thirteen**

**A/N: Yeah, this story went way longer than I thought it would. Stupid writer's block...making me drag things out -- I'd say we're (approximately) 70% through. PROBABLY three or four more chapters to go and they'll be climax-based. **

**In response to...**

_Vika: __**Yay :D I'm glad you liked it! And you're right about that, it does seem to be a theme with them. XD**_

_Jesusfreak: __**Soon enough for you? XD**_

_OinkyThePiggy: __***Gives more* :D**_

Breyannia: **Yup, for once I can say Stoick is NOT one step ahead. XD And you'll see what their plan is :)**

* * *

><p>"Dad!" Hiccup calls as he finally spots his father standing near the bonfire. Stoick appears to be venting to Gobber, who is mindlessly widdling a hunk of wood into what looks like it will eventually become a Terrible Terror.<p>

The Chief turns, hearing his son calling him but scowls slightly. "I hope you're not here to continue our previous conversation." He grumbles threateningly.

Hiccup opens his mouth to respond but before he gets the chance to, Gobber decides to speak.

"Trust me, lad." The Blacksmith sighs. "You're father's in the mood to lecture so I recommend you turn around and go find someone else to argue with."

"I'm not here to argue." Hiccup assures them both. Then, taking a steadying breath, he forces his most convincing smile and folds his arms behind his back so they won't see him nervously fidgeting with his hands. "I actually wanted to apologize..." He lies sheepishly.

And that gets Stoick's attention. His green eyes go momentarily wide, as if his son has just sprouted a second head. "Really?" He asks suspiciously.

"Yes." Hiccup nods. "I know you only grounded me because you want to protect me...and I shouldn't have given you such a hard time about it." Now that he's saying the words, he knows they're true...so the lie behind them makes his heart throb with guilt.

Despite his best efforts at keeping a straight face, Stoick can't help but smile and even glance sideways at Gobber as if to say 'are you hearing this?' Then, he clears his throat and stands up, trying to look calm and collected even though he's beaming with pride. "Well that's very mature of you, Hiccup." He says smoothly as he pats his son's shoulder. "That's a very good attribute to have as Chief, being able to admit when you're wrong."

Hiccup's fake smile widens even though his thoughts have turned a bit sour. _Maybe you should learn to practice what you preach, Dad..._ But of course he would never say that out loud. Especially not when he's trying to get his father to trust him again... So instead, he casually shifts his weight and tries to sound nonchalant when he adds, "Speaking of being Chief...I just remembered that my training got sort of interrupted by Ymir's invasion."

Stoick's eyebrow arches up in surprise at what his son is insinuating. _I thought he hated Chief training. _He recalls in confusion. "That it did, Hiccup." He confirms, bracing himself for the punch line that must be there.

"Well, I was thinking if I can't go to Berk and help out there, I'd might as well do something useful here, right? He immediately goes to gauging his dad's expression. Is he buying it?! He can't tell... "So I thought I could...go talk to Alvin."

"Alvin?" Stoick asks.

"Yeah, I mean...our alliance is still pretty new and kinda fragile. We need to fine tune it eventually. What better time than now, when we're stuck together?"

Stoick plants his hands on his hips, sensing that something isn't quite right here. Since when does Hiccup willingly go talk to Alvin, the man who kidnapped him more than once and nearly got him killed several times? The Chief looks at Gobber, hoping his friend will be able to shed some light on what's going on here. But the Blacksmith has gone back to carving, seemingly having lost interest in the conversation.

And Hiccup can see his dad's skepticism and decides to put it to rest as quickly as possible. "Besides, most of our issues recently have stemmed from Alvin and me being at odds. I think it only makes sense that I be the one to fix them..."

Stoick hesitates another moment before releasing a small sigh. "You're sure about this? I could go with you-"

"No!" Hiccup nearly shouts, just catching himself in time but still earning a strange look from his dad. "Um...I mean I should do this myself. You won't be able to help me forever, after all... Someday I'm going to need to be Chief on my own."

Stoick's smile brightens again and he nods. "That you will." He pats his son's back again and waves him off. "Go on then, go find Alvin."

Hiccup quickly thanks him and takes off at a fast clip toward the Outcast village. However, as soon as he's out of his father's line of sight, he ducks back around and heads for the Riders who are waiting for him at the beach. Hopefully that'll buy us enough time to get to Berk and get back. He says as he glances up at the steadily darkening sky.

* * *

><p>Toothless and his Rider hide behind a large boulder while Stoick explains the mission to the other teens. All of them listen intently but are eager to just leave already. None of them have been able to fly very much since fleeing their home and the dragons aren't the only ones who are restless.<p>

"Are you sure you kids will be okay?" Stoick asks, even though he can clearly see they're ready to go.

"We'll be fine, sir." Astrid assures him. "I'll make sure everyone stays together and out of trouble."

Is it just Hiccup's imagination or did she look in his general direction when she said that...?

"Excellent, thank you Astrid." He says with a curt nod. With that, he draws the letter from his tunic and hands it to her. "Keep an eye on them."

"I will." She places the paper into her satchel which hangs from Stormfly's saddle and smiles confidently. "See you when we get

back."

He steps back and watches them take off, a worried pull to his brow as they begin to disappear into the dark sky. A slightly pained look flickers across his face when he notices how clearly he can still see their bright coloration, even from this distance... But without any other choice, he sighs and trudges back toward camp.

Hiccup watches him go, his own expression a guilty one. _I'm sorry I had to lie to you, Dad... _He says silently. _But I'm right about this. You'll see._ With that, he hops onto Toothless's back, being careful not to jolt his still-achy back leg and pats the Night Fury's side. "Let's go, bud. And quietly. We don't want him to see us."

Toothless nods in understanding and fans open his sleek, black wings. Fighting his urge to let loose an excited shriek as he takes to the air. Although his wound still hurts quite a bit, it's a huge relief to be back in the sky, with his weight off his leg. Plus, this is about the time he and Hiccup usually go flying anyway... He can't help himself but purr contently.

Hiccup, on the other hand, shifts his weight and winces slightly. The sudden elevation and jarring movements of take-off send painful shocks down his bad arm and he has to bite his lip to keep from voicing his discomfort. But he's sure to regain his composure before catching up to his friends, who have stopped to wait for him, as planned.

"Took you long enough." Snotlout complains as soon as Hiccup arrives. "I was beginning to wonder if you chickened out."

Hiccup rolls his eyes and steers Toothless over beside Astrid, who hands him the letter. "Thanks." He says as he tucks it into his vest. "Now let's go. I want to be back to Outcast Island as soon as possible."

"Never thought I'd hear you say that..." Fishlegs chuckles, earning an amused snort from the twins.

"Yeah, well this time, it's not Alvin I have to worry about. It's my dad." The other boy grumbles.

"What did you tell him, anyway?" Astrid wonders as they all start flying in the direction of Berk.

Her friend offers a sheepish grin when he says, "That I was going to go talk to Alvin about our alliance and try to make amends..."

She frowns at him. "You realize that leaves a huge hole in our plans, right? What if you dad goes to check up on you or asks Alvin about it later?"

Hiccup shrugs. "I told my dad I wanted to handle it myself so he won't go looking for me...and I'll just have a quick chat with Alvin once we get back. Problem solved."

But Astrid only groans and shakes her head. "I hope you know what you're doing, Hiccup."

And despite his outward air of confidence, Hiccup silently adds a weak, _So do I..._

* * *

><p>AN: Alright, this was the VERY beginning of the climax. Next chapter will be more action-type, stealthy stuff. I predict probably three chapters after this.**_

**Also, sorry if any of the characters (particularly Hiccup) seemed OOC here...**

14. Delivery

**Chapter Fourteen**

**A/N: Another Hiccstrid moment here! (Because all these HTTYD 2 teasers have gotten me sooo excited to see them together!) Plus...you know...OTP! XD**

**In response to...**

_LegendaryGriffin: __**Yay, I'm glad you're enjoying it! :D And yes, Toothless was probably missing being able to fly.**_

_Fault: __**Lol, I don't know that he's exactly gotten 'better' at it, he just knows how to hide his nervous fidgets and jitters now. XD Poor Hiccup... And yeah, we'll see how this goes for them... *evil smile***_

_NightFury999: __**Aww, that's too bad that you're computer broke :(But hey, at least you get three updates at once because of it! **_

_OinkyThePiggy: __**They WERE rushed, though. But yes, I agree if they weren't in such a hurry, Hiccup should have gone to see Alvin first. And lol, I'm picturing Alvin driving Stoick crazy and it's a very amusing idea! XD**_

_Jesusfreak: __**Lol, no need to apologize. I'm glad you're excited for the updates :)**_

InfinitiumAce: **Aww, I hope you feel better soon! D: And you'll find out about the lie in this chapter... Get better soon! :)**

* * *

><p>It's Hiccup and Toothless who arrive on Berk first. After having suggested the others wait a distance away until he can find an uninhabited spot to land, the six Riders and their dragons lower to the ground on the south end of the island, far from the docks.<p>

"Does everyone remember the plan?" Hiccup asks as he turns toward his friends.

They all nod...except for Ruff and Tuff who are staring thoughtlessly into the distance. Hiccup sighs and snaps his fingers a few times to get their attention.

"Guys!" He groans. "Pay attention!"

"Oh, we are!" Tuffnut tells him. "Definitely."

But Hiccup isn't buying it. He sits back and folds his arms. "Then repeat what I just said."

"What I just said." The twins echo, obediently.

"Ugh! That's _not_-" But he stops when Astrid simply places a hand on his shoulder and shakes her head.

"Give it up. We're just wasting time." She sighs.

Hiccup pinches the bridge of his nose and nods. "Right. Okay then. Snotlout, Fishlegs, Ruff and Tuff, stay here and keep watch. If you hear the signal, it means we're in trouble and need help. Otherwise, we should be back in less than ten minutes."

The other Riders nod and Astrid slides off of Stormfly, taking Hiccup's hand when he reaches out to help her up. She jumps into Toothless's saddle behind him and wraps her arms around his waist.

"Just remember the plan and you'll be fine." Hiccup repeats one last time before turning and guiding Toothless back up into the clouds.

A moment of silence hangs between the remaining teens until the twins glance at each other, their expressions perplexed. "What plan?" Tuff wonders, earning a shrug from his sister and an irritated groan from the other two boys.

* * *

><p>Only about thirty seconds later, Toothless is hovering right above his Rider's home, his presence masked by the night sky.<p>

"So...where do you think would be a good place to drop this letter?" Hiccup asks Astrid as they gaze around the village below them.

"Well we can't exactly just leave it somewhere. That would be too suspicious." She points out, inciting a frustrated snort from the boy. "So we'll have to actually hand it to someone..."

"Which makes our job about a hundred times harder..." Hiccup grumbles as he begins to steer Toothless toward the ground. They land silently behind Hiccup's house, where no guards are wandering. The two kids jump off and crouch down so they won't be spotted. "Good job, bud." Hiccup whispers. "But from here, we need to go alone. Your leg would get too sore for you to follow us."

The Night Fury whimpers, not wanting to leave his friend alone but Hiccup smiles at him and scratches his chin.

"I'll be fine, Toothless." He says. "I've got Astrid to watch my back."

The blonde Viking nods reassuringly. "I won't let him out of my

sight."

So Toothless nuzzles his Rider's cheek one more time before turning toward the Haddock house and leaping in through the open window to hide in his friend's bedroom while they're gone. And once his dragon is safely out of view, Hiccup turns to Astrid and motions for her to follow him.

They sneak onto the narrow dirt path that leads behind Hiccup's house into the village. So long as no guards are patrolling this route, it can easily take them all the way to the Great Hall and back... Thor knows how many times Hiccup has walked this very alley. Should be a piece of cake...

* * *

><p>Back on Outcast Island, Stoick is pacing across the Hooligan camp. His hands are folded behind his back and ringing together nervously. He keeps glancing up at the Outcast village, wondering how his son is handling the meeting with Alvin.<p>

"Just relax, Stoick." Gobber sighs as he looks up from his nearly completed wood carving, setting it onto the log where he's seated. "Hiccup'll be fine."

"I know that, Gobber..." His friend replies tensely but doesn't stop pacing. After a few more seconds of quiet, he sighs deeply and openly stares at the Outcast's meeting hall. That should be where Hiccup is... "But maybe I should go check on-"

"Stoick." Gobber interrupts firmly. "You can't take care of him forever. Like he said, he's going to need to be Chief someday and you won't be able to follow him everywhere. Just let the boy be."

Stoick groans and then heavily flops onto the log beside Gobber. "Alright...I'll give him five more minutes. But remember, Gobber..." Stoick leans in closer so no one else will hear him. "This is Alvin we're talking about...he may be our ally for now but I don't trust him completely yet." Then, he stands up again and nods decisively to himself. "If Hiccup isn't back in five minutes, I'm going to find him myself."

* * *

><p>It doesn't take long for Hiccup and Astrid to reach the Great Hall. Now they're leaning up against a small overhang on the steep cliff behind the building, hoping the shadows below it will obscure their presence.<p>

"Hiccup, hand me the letter." Astrid whispers.

He looks over at her with a bewildered expression. "Why?"

"Look," She begins. "Thanks to your little stunt with Ymir, I'm pretty sure every single person on this island would recognize you. But they might _not_ remember me..."

He frowns and tightens his grip on the letter. "No way. No way I'm letting you go out there alone! You could be killed!" He hisses, his voice growing a little too loud for Astrid's comfort.

She covers his mouth and shakes her head, reminding him to be quiet. "We don't have time to argue about this. I'll be fine. _You're_ the injured one, remember?"

He pries her hand away and begins to say, "Astrid-" But before he can finish, she's snatched the letter from his hand and is backing toward the alley that can take her out into the open. Just as she's about to take off running to the nearest guard she sees, Hiccup catches her wrist and pulls her back.

"Hiccup, we're wasting ti-" Her eyes grow wide with shock as Hiccup's lips suddenly touch hers. The kiss only lasts about two seconds before he draws back, his expression tense.

"Be careful." He whispers. "Don't get caught."

Astrid blinks a few times as she regains her composure, a small smile lifting her cheeks. She nods firmly before turning away and hurrying out into the town square, Stoick's letter tucked against her fluttering chest.

Hiccup watches her go as he sits back against the overhang, his shoulder shooting with pain. For the first time since arriving, he lets himself moan slightly and grasp the aching joint. His skin feels a little too hot, even under the bandages and his eyes are swimming a little. Bowing his head to catch his breath, he silently wills Astrid to hurry. He isn't sure how much longer he can go without passing out... _It's for Berk. _He reminds himself. _They couldn't have gotten here without Toothless and he wouldn't have gone without me... I can do this. Just a little while longer._

Almost as if on que, he hears the light pounding of boots. Astrid throws herself around the corner, eyes wide. "Get up!" She hisses, grabbing his wrist and yanking him to his feet, completely missing the pained wince he gives in return to the sudden movement.

"What happened?!" He gasps out as he struggles to match her feverish pace.

"Nothing." She replies breathlessly. "But he seemed suspicious and I don't want him looking for us and figuring out who we are."

"Did he take the letter?!" Hiccup demands worriedly.

"Yes. And I didn't say anything so he doesn't know I speak Norse... He probably just thinks I'm acting weird and should be in bed at this hour..."

Hiccup smirks at her and they slow their running as they round the corner that brings the Haddock house back into view. "Let's just hope they buy it..." He mumbles, reaching up to rub his eyes. Their lids suddenly feel a little...heavy.

"Yeah. But we'll have to figure that out later. I'll feel much better once we're back on Outcast Island." Astrid tells him as they reach the open window where Toothless is hiding. "Toothless!" She calls up quietly. "It's us! Come down so we can get out of here!"

Seconds later, the Night Fury's wide green eyes poke over the ledge

and he scurries out onto the slanted roof and then down into the snow beside them, landing with a muted thump beside Astrid, who doesn't waste any time in hopping straight into the saddle.

It's while she's bucking herself down that she realizes Hiccup hasn't moved from his spot... "Come on, hurry up." She says without looking up.

When Hiccup doesn't reply, however, both Toothless and Astrid look in his direction...at just the right moment to see his knees buckling and his head tipping backwards as he collapses into the slush at his feet. A red stain slowly growing through the fabric of his tunic...

15. Escape To Outcast Island

**Chapter Fifteen**

**A/N: We're almost done, guys! After Blood Letter wraps up, I'll be writing a story for a request I got from Slowpoke09 (for info on that, go to my profile). It's called Venomous and I'm pretty excited to write it!**

**In response to...**

_XxPinkMustachexX: __**Lol, I totally understand your Hiccstrid-needs. I also have a need for that at times. And I KNOW! The movie looks so cute! All these clips they've been releasing lately are psyching me up SO MUCH! EEE~ *Ahem* Excuse me. Yes, PA does get a lot of storms. XD Although I haven't gotten too many yet. Just two bad ones and the rest were just intense drizzles...
**_

_InfinitiumAce: __**Yeah, I tried to pick up the pace a little. It felt slow for a few chapters there. And as for your question about 'lips feeling heavy' it's actually 'lids', as in eyelids. XD "Their lids suddenly feel heavy" And no, the kiss was not from Dreamworks spoilers. XD It's just a Hiccup-initiated kiss, which I've used a few times in my past fanfics, even prior to knowing about HTTYD 2's existence. (Wow, that was a long time ago... o_o)**_

_OinkyThePiggy: __**You're right about that. Five minutes is definitely not long enough... *evil grin* But yay Hiccstrid!
XD**_

_NightFury999: __**AH! I'm sorry! It's just my way! XDD Thanks, I'm glad you liked the chapter!**_

_Jesusfreak: __**I guess you'll just have to wait and see...
XD**_

_Jo: __**Ah, I love them too. (OTP!) LOL!**_

_Foxlight The Dragon Trainer: __**I have updated as per your request! XD And awww, thank you! :) It always brightens my day to hear that people think I'm a good writer and are excited for updates
:D**_

Breyannia: **Yup, they are in some deep trouble now...**

Rachlie: **Yay, I'm glad! I mean...not that the suspense is killing you...DON'T DIE! Just...I...okay, I'll stop now. XD I'm glad you liked the chapter!**

* * *

><p>Nearly twenty minutes later, Stoick is still pacing back and forth, back and forth across camp. Having been talked down by Gobber, Mulch, and Bucket several times, he's nearly tearing his beard out. Why isn't Hiccup back yet? He knows it isn't sensible to be this worried... But this Alvin the Treacherous we're talking about! _Treachery_ isn't exactly out of the question here...and his son has been gone for too long.

"That's it!" He barks as he begins to march up the hill toward the Outcast Village. "I'm going to find him!"

Gobber roll his eyes and starts to speak, only to shut right up again at the furious look his friend gives him.

"And don't try to talk me out of it again! Hiccup could be in danger!" He shouts as he continues onward, his fists clenched angrily. And while anger is his primary emotion right now, beside worry, there is..._something else_ he's feeling as well. A sort of...pang in his chest whenever he thinks of Hiccup. It's more than worry...it's an ominous, foreboding feeling. Like a black cloud swallowing his heart. Something's not right here. He can feel it.

* * *

><p>"Hiccup!" Astrid gasps as she scrambles off of Toothless's back and over to where her friend has fainted. She reaches up to cover her mouth at the sight of all the blood leaking through his vest. His wound has reopened...! "Hiccup!" She whispers feverishly, gently shaking his other shoulder to rouse him. "Come on, please wake up!"<p>

After a moment, his eyes flutter open and he moans quietly. "Astrid...?" He asks groggily, gazing around with half-lidded eyes. "What happened?"

"You passed out." She replies, helping him sit up. "And your shoulder is bleeding again."

He glances down at his wound and grimaces when he finds it stained red. "Seems that way..." He confirms in a rough voice. His brow is knotted in pain and he's swaying slightly, obviously dizzy.

"Can you walk?" She asks him.

"I think so." Hiccup says as he draws back his legs and leans against the side of his house, pushing himself up. Almost immediately his face drains of color and he closes his eyes, his head bowing slightly.

"Hiccup...?" Astrid asks, sounding worried. "Are you okay...?"

But he doesn't answer her at first. Instead, he straightens up again and goes over to Toothless, leaning heavily on his dragon's back. "We

should hurry..." He grumbles distantly. "...before I faint again."

She nods and hurries over, hopping into the saddle and pulling Hiccup up behind her. When he gives her a questioning look as to why he's not in front, she simply says, "If you do faint again, I don't you to be in the driver's seat..."

"Understandable..." He mumbles, shamelessly leaning his forehead on her back as he closes his eyes to stop their spinning. When he reopens them, he finds his vision dotted with black stars and finds himself feeling vaguely glad he's not steering right now.

* * *

><p>Stoick doesn't even hesitate before throwing open the black, double doors of the Oucast Great Hall. He storms inside, finding Alvin seated on a rather large throne-like seat made of Loki tree wood and dragon bones... "ALVIN!" He barks, drawing the other man's attention.<p>

"Now's not a good time, Stoick." Alvin grumbles, obviously irritated over something. "I've been trying to deal with this mess all day!" He growls, motioning to the man kneeling before him.

But whatever issue his former friend is having, Stoick doesn't care. "Where's my son, Alvin?!" He demands loudly.

With a huge sigh, Alvin sits back in his chair and gives Stoick an annoyed glare. "I said I'm busy. I don't 'ave time to keep track of all your lit'le refugees!"

But Stoick isn't having any of this. He stomps up the few stairs that lead to the throne so he's looming above Alvin. "My son." Stoick growls. "Where is he?!"

"UGH! 'ow should I know where your lit'le runt is?! Isn't he your responsibility, Stoick? He's your son!"

Berk's Chief takes a step back, a suspicious look on his face. "Are you saying you haven't seen him today?"

"No, I 'aven't!" Alvin tells him. "Like I said, I've been 'ere all day. Trying to figure out what to do about this man's rat infestation."

Stoick's eyes narrow. "Hiccup said he was coming to see you an hour ago..."

"Well apparently he changed his mind." Alvin insists. "Now, if you're done bothering me, I have work to do."

Stoick nods, feeling slightly numb. Alvin's telling the truth...Hiccup never came here... So that means- With a loud swear, the Chief pushes forward again. "Alvin! I need to borrow a dragon!"

* * *

><p>"Woah! What happened to Hiccup?" Tuffnut wonders as Toothless

lands on the beach. Astrid slides off of the saddle and helps Hiccup down as well, the boy having to lean most of his weight on her shoulder. But she doesn't mind.<p>

"His wound reopened." She tells them. "We need to get him home as soon as possible."

"Um, Astrid...not to argue with you or anything...but if we need to leave immediately, why'd get off Toothless?" Fishlegs asks her.

"Because Hiccup has to ride with someone else." She says. "The smell of his blood is freaking Toothless out." She motions to the Night Fury, whose pupils are mere slits against his green eyes. His nose twitches nervously and he never stops staring directly at his pale and weakened Rider. "He keeps turning around to look at Hiccup and we almost crashed twice."

"He can ride with me." Fishlegs offers.

But Astrid hesitates. "No offense, Fishlegs...but I think we'd be better off with Hiccup riding on a faster dragon. Someone who can fly in front of Toothless so he keeps his eyes straight ahead."

The blonde boy nods glumly and pats Meatlug's head, whispering comforting words to her. "Don't worry, girl! You're the best dragon to me!"

"Snotlout," Astrid says firmly. "Can I trust you to take care of him?"

"Sure thing!" The arrogant boy winks. "Hiccup'll be nice and safe riding on Hookfang!" As if on cue, the Monstrous Nightmare's body catches fire, causing his Rider to scream in pain.

"I'll be fine..." Hiccup murmurs to Astrid, sensing her reluctance to let him go. "Hookfang will behave himself while I'm riding. Right, Hookfang?"

The Nightmare seems to calm down and he lowers his head, motioning for Hiccup to climb on. Snotlout stares wide-eyed down at his ornery dragon as if to say 'why do you listen to HIM and not ME?!' He snorts angrily before reaching down to pull his cousin into the saddle behind him, grumbling 'Show off' at the same time.

"Thank you, Hookfang." Astrid smiles, petting the Nightmare's snout. Then she remounts Toothless and whistles to her Nadder. "Stormfly, follow."

And then they all take to the air, rising straight up into the clouds so they won't be spotted by the invaders on their way back to camp. Hopefully said Romans will buy what the letter says and return home, leaving Berk safe for the Hooligan tribe's return... Hopefully.

* * *

><p>AN: Next chapter is the finale, guys! I look forward to seeing you there and thanks for all the amazing reviews! You guys are amazing! **_

**If you have any questions about my future fanfics, PM me or (as usual) check out my profile. I keep it updated daily as to what's going on with my stories :)**

16. Retreat

**Chapter Sixteen**

**A/N: In response to...**

_LegendaryGriffin: __**Sorry I didn't reply in the last chapter, your review only showed up after I posted. And wow, someone who actually likes my cliffhangers! XD I'm glad you like it :)**_

_InfinitiumAce: __**Yeah, I was going to mention that episode but you beat me to it! XD And yep, I feel like Hookfang only behaves himself around the other Riders. (Particularly Hiccup) But he's ornery towards Snotlout, which is cute in and of itself. They're a lot alike if you ask me :)**_

_Breyannia: __**Yep, wouldn't be surprising if Stoick flipped on Hiccup...but I guess you'll have to read and find out. XD**_

_NightFury999: __**I understand that conflation, LOL! And thanks, I'm glad you think it's 'epicness'.**_

_Jesusfreak: __**XD**_

_XxPinkMustachexX: __**It was drizzling while I was in school but stopped before I got out to the busses :) (But was that weird combination of cloudy, muggy, and sunny patches that reminds me of Berk so it was cool! XD) Cool :D I'm glad you think Venomous sounds promising! It's sort of a combo of something I had wanted to write for a long time (but never had the motivation to do) and a requested prompt so I'm excited to write it!**_

* * *

><p>For Thor's sake, Hiccup! Stoick growls to himself as he flies determinedly toward Berk. Hiccup is there, he can tell. And he is in a _world_ of trouble as soon as his father finds him! _Why?! Why can't you just obey one, simply order?! Why must you be so reckless and disobedient?! _But that dark feeling is still fluttering in his chest, feeling a bit like a butterfly flapping its black wings against his heart. _Please be okay..._

* * *

><p>"...cup."

_ "...iccup?"_

_ "Hiccup!"_

"Huh?!" Hiccup's head snaps up much too quickly, proving Astrid's suspicion that he had been on the verge of passing out again. The groggy-looking boy turns in the saddle to face her, his expression confused. "Did you say something?"

The Viking girl frowns disapprovingly. "Yes, I called you three times already..."

"Sorry." He mutters, turning away again. "I didn't hear you..."

"See! I told you he just didn't hear her!" Tuffnut suddenly shouts to his sister. "Pff, and you thought he forgot what his name was!"

"Hey, it's not impossible! Remember that time I convinced you your name wasn't Tuffnut?" Ruff laughs.

"Ha! Proves what you know! You never had me tricked..." Tuff snorts and shakes his head like it's ridiculous that he would ever forget his own name.

His sister shrugs and turns away, seemingly letting the issue drop. That is, until she peeks over at him and smirks. "Hey, Olaf!" She calls innocently and, as if on cue, Tuffnut looks back over and asks,

"What?" But he immediately catches himself and scowls at her, punching his twin very hard in the arm. Of course she retaliates instantly, almost knocking him off of Belch's back.

"Guys! Could you-" But Snotlout is interrupted when Fishlegs and Meatlug buzz up behind him and call out,

"Look! There's someone flying toward us!"

All eyes, even Hiccup's, turn to the figure gliding toward them on the back of a skittish, new tamed Gronckle. Snotlout feels his younger cousin go slightly stiff behind him and hears the boy mutter a quiet, "Oh great..."

Upon closer inspection, Snotlout figures out why. "It's the Chief!" He calls back to the rest of them. Astrid groans and pats Toothless's side, signaling for him to fly faster.

"Come on, boy. I think we have a lot of explaining to do..."

"No, Astrid." Hiccup says, stopping her. "I'll talk to him...I'm the one that insisted I go."

She hesitates and doesn't get the chance to argue. Because almost a second later, Stoick's booming voice cuts through the space as if he were right next to them.

"HICCUP HORRENDOUS HADDOCK THE THIRD!" He shouts so loud the dragons shake their heads in confusion for a moment, their ears twitching from the unaccustomed loudness. However, it appears he hasn't figured out it's not his son who's riding the Night Fury... As soon as he gets close enough to realize this, however, his expression shifts drastically. Straight from blind fury to fatherly concern. He glances around the various dragons, searching for Hiccup...only to find him pale, guilty face peeking out from behind Snotlout's back.

The burst of relief that floods his father's chest is almost enough

to make him forget his previous rage. ...almost. "Hiccup!" He growls, steering the heavy boulder class dragon closer to his son. His gaze immediately finds the patch of red slowly growing on his shoulder and grimaces. "This is exactly why I didn't want you to go!" He cries angrily. Without wasting a moment, he swoops up beside his son and pulls him onto the Gronckle's back in front of him, turning the boy's shoulder and getting a closer look at his torn wound.

Beads of red have welled up again, despite the fresh layer of new, pink skin. But by the amount of dried crimson on Hiccup's clothes and smeared down the front of his collarbone, it looks like a lot of blood spilled out in a very short amount of time. Stoick rakes a hand through his hair and sighs. "You're lucky you didn't faint with this amount of blood loss..."

"Um, actually..." Astrid begins, only stopping herself once Hiccup throws her a warning look. It seems to say 'he doesn't need to know!' But of course it's too late.

Stoick glares down at his son, who flinches in response.

"I'm sorry, Dad." Hiccup mumbles. "But they couldn't have snuck onto Berk without me. I...don't regret going." And then he braces himself, trying to prepare for the screaming of a lifetime. He's just not accustomed to talking back to his father...despite the amount he's been doing it lately.

Surely enough, Stoick's face grows dangerously red and his green eyes light up in fury. But...after a moment, he seems to calm down, much to Hiccup's surprise. "Okay, my underhanded son, listen well..." He grumbles. "You are in a HUGE amount of trouble for SO MANY things... But I'm going to wait until we get back to Outcast Island and patch you up..."

When Hiccup looks back at him in confusion, his father offers a threatening smile.

"You're pale as a ghost. Wouldn't want you 'fainting' right in the middle of a lecture."

So Hiccup groans and leans his head in his hand. _I am so sorry, Toothless. I get the feeling I'm going to be grounded for the rest of my life..._

* * *

><p>And Stoick keeps his word. As soon as Hiccup's shoulder has been rebound, cleaned, and medicated for the small infection that had started there, the boy's father goes of a rampage of punishments that seems to stretch on forever. And it's just as Hiccup had feared. The words "grounded forever!" actually leave Stoick's mouth. Although Gobber, who is sitting awkwardly in the corner of the room, having been trapped by the suddenness of his friend's furious outburst, merely rolls his eyes at his apprentice and shakes his head.<p>

At the moment, Stoick is currently pacing the short length of their tent, a small moment of silence hanging there as he tries to figure out what to yell about next. Hmm, maybe lying to him about Alvin? Or possibly making a fool out of him in front of their new ally? Sure, that's technically the same crime but it's two different ways of

saying it... And he's just opened his mouth to start another round of lecturing when the tent flap flies open, revealing a breathless and bright-eyed Astrid.

"It's the Romans!" She pants, wiping her sweaty bangs from her eyes.

"What?" Stoick asks firmly.

"They're LEAVING Berk!" She cries excitedly. "The plan worked! They never spotted us and they believed the letter!"

Hiccup's formerly dull expression instantly brightens. "They're leaving?!" He gasps, sitting up from his bed. "It worked?!"

"Yes!" She confirms with a huge grin. "We were out doing recon and saw the ships leaving! No one is left on the island and they took all of their weapons and supplies with them!"

Hiccup laughs in excited relief. "We did it...!" He breathes in sudden disbelief. "We really did it...!"

"We can go home!" Astrid reminds them.

Stoick and Gobber exchange pleased looks before both of them start hurrying toward the door. "We've got a lot of things to take care of before we leave...but we can probably set sail by tonight." He tells his friend as they rush off, leaving Hiccup and the list of punishments behind.

As soon as the tent flap is closed again, Astrid's innocent smile twists into a knowing smirk. She strides over to Hiccup and stops beside him, her hands on her hips. "Just for the record, that's the second time I've saved you from your father."

He stares at her in confusion for a second. "Wait...what do you mean? Are the Romans really gone?"

She nods before sitting down on his bed side. "Of course, I wouldn't lie about something like that! But I could have waited until you dad was done 'talking' before I made the announcement."

Hiccup smiles gratefully at her. "I'm glad you didn't wait."

She chuckles. "You're welcome."

And Hiccup snickers in return. "Thank you." He says, his eyes suspiciously following the hand she is slowly raising toward his cheek. His mind instantly flies into a flurry of thought, trying to figure out what that hand will do. Is she going to hit him? Kiss him? Gods, Astrid is so confusing sometimes! He kissed her on Berk...and she didn't say anything about it but so maybe-

His thoughts are cut off when she suddenly starts laughing. "For the love of Thor, Hiccup, don't look so terrified!" Astrid's hand cups his cheek, ruling out the hit-option...but that means-

She leans down and kisses him, their lips lingering together for a while before they eventually part. "That was for kissing me on Berk." She growls, inciting a grin from the boy.

But before she can draw away, he recaptures her lips and her eyes grow wide from the unexpected kiss. When Hiccup finally draws away again, his smile is almost dopey. "And that was for rescuing me...again"

* * *

><p>Rome's emperor glares down at the group of men kneeling before him on the glossy marble floor. "What do you mean you received a notification that you were to move out?! From who?!"<p>

One of the soldiers looks up timidly. "Um...you, your highness. It was addressed from the Roman High King."

And the shrewd king's eyes narrow in understanding. "Ah, I see. We've been set up... Clever Vikings."

The soldier bows his head again and in a firm voice asks, "What are your orders, my liege?"

The emperor sits back on his throne, drumming his fingers against. "Nothing for now. It would take too long to return and we've already lost your commanding officer." A knowing smile touches his lips as he gazes out the arched window overlooking his sparkling city. "Our empire already touches every corner of this world...one tiny heap of rock isn't worth spending more resources on. Let them be for now."

* * *

><p>AN: AND THE MOST UNORIGINAL, CHEESY ENDING EVER AWARD GOES TO LEISATHEGREAT! XD Thanks for reading and reviewing guys! I hope you liked Blood Letter and also hope I'll see you in my next story, Venomous!**_

End
file.